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"OH! STANLEY, IT IS MAMMA!" SAID SYBIL. "SHE WILL BE SO ANGRY."

## CUPID'S CAPTIVES.

### [A NOVELETTE.]

#### CHAPTER I.

Old Squire North lived at Nest Bank as his father and grandfather had lived before him, proudly—royally it might almost be said. No king on his throne dispensed favours more regally than he. All that belonged to him was—in his opinion—of the best; and the one drawback, the one sorrow of his life, was that amongst his family of five not one daughter had been given, but that all were sons. Five handsome lads as he termed them, though they were men grown, yet lads they would be to him, never older in his eyes as long as they shared his home.

"You'll be thinking soon of leaving the parent nest," was one of his constant jokes.

He rubbed his hands gleefully as he made it. Not that he was tired of having his sons with him in his wifeless home; it was not that, but he was ambitious to see the name descend to another generation, and, most of all, he wished his heir to marry.

George, his second son, was engaged to an heiress, Lucy Wood of Glenfell, a brunette of twenty-two, and the engagement gave him satisfaction.

It was all very well for George to marry money. He was the second son, and, though far from penniless, an addition to his income was not to be despised. Lucy Wood was the girl for him, and their attachment was regarded favourably. But Eric, the heir, must get a titled wife.

The heir to Nest Bank could command lofty designs, and Mr. North was ambitious enough to will that his first-born should do so. Eric North, however, though the eldest, was not by any means the best-looking, neither the finest of the North family. He was several inches shorter than the rest, and his face, if pleasant and

kindly, was decidedly plain. He resembled his dead mother. George, Stanley, Leyland and Arthur, *au contraire*, were the counterpart of their father, tall, stately, broad-shouldered, and handsome men.

Nature is sometimes just in her gifts. To a certain extent she had been so in the North family. The eldest had the most money and the estates in prospect; the younger sons had a limited income and prepossessing appearances.

"Eric shall marry well," soliloquised North *père*. "Lady Judith Penrhyn will do splendidly for him. Certainly, she is rather his senior, but what is nine or ten years when you think of the position it will secure for his descendants."

Mr. North's position was a secured one in the county. How a match with Lady Judith would improve it, it was difficult to conceive; but people possessing all things oft take strange notions (may it not be said whims?) into their head and stick to them with dogged pertinacity, too, when there is no reason for so doing.

"Lady Judith North! it will sound well,"

said the old gentleman, as he walked round his well-kept grounds.

He had a spud in his hand, and he cut down mercilessly any daisy root or thistle that presumed to show its head within his proud domains.

"Ah! Is that you, Eric?" he shouted, catching sight of someone in the distance. "Here, I want to speak to you!"

"Do you want me, father?" replied a voice. "I am helping Elliott to mark out the tennis courts for this afternoon."

"Oh! It's you, Stanley, is it? I wanted Eric."

Captain Stanley North was home on furlough. If his father's sight had not been failing he could never have mistaken Stanley's fine figure for Eric's. The Captain laughed to himself as he leant down over the green lawn. He taken for Eric, indeed!

"I suppose the old boy wants to din that everlasting monomania of his into 'Eric's' patient ears. Not that I don't wish him success, for particular reasons of my own. I fear he is mashed on the sweet Sybil. If so, there'll be war to the knife between us. All is fair in love or war, and I will not give her up lightly even to the heir."

There was a sneer on the handsome Captain's countenance as he spoke, that completely altered the expression of it, and that boded ill to his brother should matters come to the worst.

"What is the immaculate Captain so busy over?" exclaimed a voice at his side.

Captain North neither started nor looked up, but pursued his marking out.

"Is that you, Ley?" he asked, carelessly.

"Certainly it is I in *propria persona*, and I have come to assure myself that my eyes were not deceiving me. Stanley, the polished dandy, smiling his gentlemanly fingers with work! Is it possible!"

"Elliott does his business so badly. Ten chances to one if a gardener fellow measures the lines right."

"Ah!" exclaimed Leyland, taking his cigar out of his mouth, "and the fair Sybil is coming this afternoon! *à cet égard*."

"I suppose she is," was the indifferent reply.

"You cannot take me in, Stanley," laughed Ley North. "I know how your heart lies in that direction. She—"

"Don't talk nonsense," interrupted Stanley, with impatience. "Eric is wooing her. Spare your taunts for him."

"What chance, though, has Eric the plain against Stanley the irresistible?" queried Ley, significantly.

"Every chance," retorted the Captain, standing bolt upright in his fierceness. "Is he not the heir?"

"As if Sybil Graham would care for that. Have I not seen her blue eyes following you in that unmistakable wishfulness that one cannot but comprehend? Have I not noted your avidity in seeking her? Besides, our father—what of him? Has he not set his mind on having the Lady Judith for his daughter-in-law? If Eric were not such a simpleton in his ideas of dutiful obedience I might—"

"Stop," commanded the Captain, haughtily. "I don't care to discuss Eric and his wooing. He will go his way; I shall go mine. How about yourself, Ley? Have you forgotten your pretty little peasant, Ruth Layton, the girl who went for a trained nurse?"

"Hush!" exclaimed Leyland North in a terrified whisper, looking around as if fearful even on that open ground of being overheard. "Hush! would you have the whole world know my secret?"

"There is only old Elliott, and he is as deaf as a post," declared Stanley, looking towards the gardener, some twenty yards off. "How about Ruth?"

Leyland's handsome face (dark-eyed, dark haired) worked.

"Have you hidden the pretty little girl away somewhere?" pursued the Captain, biting his moustache.

Leyland made no answer.

"Well, marriage would have been—"

Stanley North, with a sneer. There was no mistaking his meaning.

Leyland cut his brother's speech short.

"Marriage was the only honourable course, and I took it," he said, resolutely.

"You were a simpleton then," was the rejoinder. And the Captain bent over his work again.

"I might be classed so, by—by—" stammered Leyland, short for a word. "Well, by men of the world—society men, perhaps I should, but in my own eyes I did right."

"You counted the cost?"

"Certainly."

"And it was not too heavy to pay?"

"Don't I tell you it was not?"

"How long have you been a benedict?" pursued the Captain, relentlessly.

"Eight months."

"Eight months! and that has not been enough to cure you of your infatuation!"

Leyland fidgeted.

He was younger than Stanley, and had always looked up to him as a model of excellence. It was hard to cast off his old allegiance after years and years of service; but he thought he had right on his side now.

"If my marriage has not been all that I imagined it would be I do not blame Ruth for the failure," he said, nobly. "If she has proved my inferior, mentally and physically, ought I not to have been prepared? Her education was very deficient, and—"

"It tries your cultivated ears now."

"I must confess it has done so; yet it was not Ruth's fault. Her grammar is not really worse under matrimony's chain than it was during courtship's spell."

"Yet the glamour having fallen off, shows you the folly of your infatuation."

"Shows me rather the imperfection of her speech. But I am teaching her. She is an art pupil, and so gentle. Will you come and see her, Stanley?"

"Thanks, I would rather be excused. Peasant perfection never was my style."

Leyland coloured painfully.

"Besides, I have a certain sense of obedience left in my wayward disposition which shows me that disobedience to parents is a sin. That—"

"Don't," interrupted Leyland, passionately.

"In the deception played on my father lies the sting of the whole thing. Yet what could I do? Oh, don't, Stanley! I don't insinuate that. I could not be so base."

"You ought, then, if you were such a coward, to have given her up."

"Neither was I able to accomplish that. I tried. She, bless her, helped me. It was long before I could induce her to listen to my suit."

"Mock affectation. Coy presumption."

"You should see her," exclaimed Leyland, passionately. "But wait. When—"

"When you have educated her, then you will introduce your piece of perfection to us, and expect us all to bend the knee in allegiance."

"I shall hope you will all receive her as an equal, and as my wife. Oh! I long for the day when I can bring her to my father and tell him all about it. When I shall claim his forgiveness and obtain it. When—"

"You are not bringing Ruth to the party this afternoon, then?" interrupted the Captain, with an ill concealed sneer.

A hot answer was on Ley's lips. He could scarcely keep it in. The taunt was undeserved. Yet he had to control himself.

Eric, racquet in hand, was close upon them.

"A pleasant day for tennis," he observed, as he neared his brothers.

"Ah, and a pleasant guest coming, too," muttered Stanley, under his breath. "He rejoices openly in his love for Sybil. I'll outwit the dolt."

"I have bought a new racquet," said Eric. "I should like to try it. Will you have a game either of you?"

He had not caught Stanley's speech. It was uttered too low to catch his ears.

"I have no objection," said Ley, pleasantly.

Captain North walked towards his eldest brother.

"I suppose you are looking forward to wooing

Sybil Graham," he said, disagreeably. "Cannot you keep your joy to yourself?"

"Why, Stanley, what has angered you?"

asked Eric, in amazed surprise.

"I never said anything bad," retorted Stanley, cooling down. "But you have to choose Lady Judith. She—"

"Lady Judith Penrhyn will never be anything to me," declared Eric, smiling pleasantly, his plain face growing almost handsome in its honest candour and frankness. "You are free to win her, Stanley. Sybil, as you so wisely guessed, is the wife for me!"

"She never shall be, I swear!" said Stanley, under his breath.

"Our father," he exclaimed, aloud.

"Our father is goodness itself," declared Eric, loyally, "and I love and honour him as a son ought. Moreover, I recognise his right to command us to a certain extent so long as we are under his roof. But in the question of marriage I—"

"The only question on which there is any need to exact obedience."

"Well, on that point I shall take my own way."

"Con—found you," muttered the Captain, *sotto voce*.

"I consider every man ought to choose for himself," said Eric, firmly.

"So do I," declared Ley, with emphatic decision.

"Thanks!" said Eric, supposing his brother was openly championing his cause, and little guessing that he was but standing up for his own choice. "Thanks, Ley!"

"Oh! he does not require any gratitude," observed the Captain, in a tone that made Leyland tremble for his secret. "But what about this racquet, Eric! Ah!" taking it in his hand. "I thought you were mistaken. This is mine!"

"But I bought it at Garrard's, in Wincome, yesterday!" broke in Eric, positively. "It has a red-leather mixed with white round the handle. I am certain it is mine."

"You are mistaken, nevertheless. Yours will be in the house. This is mine."

"But—"

"Oh! It's mine, sure enough, and I shall keep it," declared the Captain, walking off. Eric stared after his brother open mouthed.

"There is some mistake somewhere," he commented. "Shall I have time to ride over to Wincome and purchase another?"

He strode into the house.

Captain North turned and looked after him. Leyland had gone in another direction.

"Ah! I have done him out of his racquet, at any rate. Got one cheaply! Where's the harm, either? He has twice as much money as I and not half the appearances to keep up. If he were not a dolt he would not, of course, be imposed upon. But I'll circumvent him all round; win Sybil, and laugh at him. My father will pay me for so doing, too. And, if it suits my purpose, I shall split on Eric. All is fair in love and war. Now I will go and rest for this afternoon's party."

## CHAPTER II.

THE lawn at Nest Bank was a pretty scene. Men and women in tennis costume flitted hither and thither in eager play. Girls in white dresses moved about watching them, and all was, outwardly, at any rate, happiness. The sun shone hotly, throwing its glare like a golden mantle over the whole aspect, lighting it up, and brightening it. Flower-beds glowed more brilliantly, and the brooklet, which gilded silently through the squire's grounds at Aldley, looked like a silver mirror under the sun's rays.

"Forty!" called out Eric. "Forty, thirty."

"No! Mr. North," replied Lady Judith. "It is forty all!"

"Deuce!" he said, a moment later making a lucky shot. "Game!" he called out.

"I am afraid I am a poor partner," said Lady Judith, going close to him. A tall, gaunt figure was she, unstylishly dressed, and of about forty



years. "Still we have won—thanks to your good play."

He was about to respond courteously, when his father's voice, calling "Stanley, here are Mrs. and Miss Graham!" altered his decision. He was off in an instant, racket in hand, to welcome his visitors.

Lady Judith Penrhyn glanced after his abrupt departure in displeasure. Seldom was she so cavalierly treated. Who were those Grahams! Nice enough people, no doubt, but scarcely in her set. Lady Judith wiped her face surreptitiously. Tennis was a weariness and a fatigue to her, but she did not wish to show it. She liked to be thought girlish. Moreover, she desired to win Eric, and she knew his father favoured the idea.

"Warm! Lady Judith," observed General Moore, going up to her. "Would you not prefer to rest awhile?"

There were many younger girls anxiously waiting to take Lady Judith's place. They listened eagerly for her reply.

"Thanks! I am not the least hot," she replied, stiffly.

"I wonder at it," declared the General. "Old people, perhaps, feel it," she observed, maliciously.

"I think we must," he said, smiling. "I am an old Indian campaigner; yet I never remember feeling warmer than I do to-day. Eh! Mr. Mortlake, what say you?"

Mr. Mortlake and several other young men endorsed the General's opinion strongly.

"Where is Mr. North?" asked Lady Judith impatiently. "He is keeping our game waiting."

"He is coming!" answered Roy Chandler. "He has Miss Graham with him."

At that instant, Eric North, with a fair, attractive-looking girl, sweet and refined, came to the court where Lady Judith was. People pressed forward eagerly to greet the new comer. Lady Judith was introduced, and bowed stiffly. She was not pleased with the interruption if others were. She did not like, moreover, the look of rapacious admiration that was on Eric's face. Eric North was to be her lover, and no one else.

"The game awaits you, Mr. North!" she said.

"We finished it," he declared. "There had better perhaps, be a change of partners now."

"I play!" spoke up Lady Judith, haughtily.

"And I retire!" declared Eric North, courteously.

"Chandler, you will only be too proud to take Lady Judith Penrhyn."

Chandler bowed with deference; but in his heart he resented being saddled with her ladyship's bad play.

As for her, her face worked with mortification and chagrin. She longed to throw down her racket, and leave the grounds. Discretion, however, she decided, was the better part of valour.

Eric turned to Sybil Graham. His eyes full of love were bent on her fair face.

"You will not mind waiting a little," he observed, courteously, "as both courts are filled. Will you walk with me to the large conservatory?"

"Per-haps—I ought not—to monopolise your time," she replied diffidently. "Your—other guests—they—"

"There are none who claim my attention as you do," he answered, emotionally. "I—"

"Miss Graham!" exclaimed Captain North, striding up, "Will you take a racket. I am *en désespoir* for a good partner. Do have pity on me!"

His manner was quietly sedate. Even Eric's suspicions were not aroused, though he guessed his teeth in annoyance, as he saw the Captain take away his beloved treasure. Sybil's pretty face was covered with blushes.

"I hope Mr. North doesn't mind," she said diffidently. "He was going to show me the conservatories."

"Never mind! I will show you them later," declared the Captain audaciously, and he fixed his bright brown eyes with significance on the girl's blushing face in a manner that set all her

pulses throbbing. She scarcely knew what she was doing for the next few moments, so fluttered was she.

Eric mingled among the guests, but the centre of attraction was somehow the court where Sybil played. He kept returning to it. Suddenly his eyes were opened. It was at a stoppage in the game. Stanley faced him, his head bent in devotion over Sybil, speaking tenderly to her.

A pang smote Eric's heart, he scarcely knew why, for no thought of his brother's disloyalty found place in his bosom; yet there was something in the attitude that was displeasing to him.

"Stanley," he said, going up to the captain, "it is time you took your turn out. Ella Moreton was inquiring for you a moment ago; she has a message from her brother. I can take your place in the game."

"Not if I know it," was the significant reply.

"But Ella Moreton?"

"Her message can wait—she also. Sy—Miss Graham, it is your serve."

But Sybil Graham, instead of resuming the game, went up to Eric and handed him her racket deprecatingly. His hand closed over hers as it was extended to him. He looked longingly into the blue eyes, but they never wavered nor flinched as they had done when they met Stanley's.

"You play instead of me," she entreated. "I really am tired—I am not a real lover of tennis."

Eric was about to respond eagerly, but Stanley interposed, his manner haughty.

"Excuse me, Sybil," he said, "but you must finish this set, it is due to me. After that, if you wish to give up to my brother, you can do so."

The startled, fawn-like creature was obedience at once.

"There are only two more games to decide it," she said, "then—"

"Then you and I will wander about awhile," said Stanley, turning his back on his brother, and whispering soothingly into the young girl's ear.

She had thought him displeased. His tender tones soothed her more than the sweetest words could have done. The revulsion from dismay to happiness was too great, it flooded her spirits ecstatically.

"Very well, Captain North," she said, raising her eyes to his shyly, "I will do as you wish in the matter."

"Thanks!" he responded, in a dangerously low tone. And the captain, an adept in love affairs, read the girl's heart like a story-book.

He knew her heart was won. So much so, that in his confidence of success he might, had there been another girl near, and his time at his own disposal, have begun to flirt with her. As there was none, and the game needed all his attention, he gave himself up to it.

Eric watched closely, but saw no further need for annoyance in his brother's behaviour.

His duties called him elsewhere, and on his return another couple had taken Stanley and Sybil's place. He inquired their whereabouts anxiously.

"They were going into the garden, Mr. North—the lower garden, Mr. North," said Ella Moreton. "The Verby-Parsons were just before them. I—"

Eric waited to hear no more, but rushed after them. A few steps and he had to halt.

"Oh, Mr. North!" exclaimed Lady Judith, meeting and stopping him, "I have been looking for you everywhere. Will you mend my racket for me, I am in such grief about it!"

Eric looked wildly for a way of escape, but saw none. The fates seemed against him. With a groan that was not the less deep in that it was muttered, he resigned himself to the situation.

"I will do my best," he declared, "but if my racket will do for this afternoon, it is at your service."

That did not suit Lady Judith, she meant to claim his attention.

"Ah! but to-morrow and many a day when there is no Mr. North near!" she simpered.

Never had Lady Judith Penrhyn looked so obnoxious in Eric's eyes.

"These manners that are deemed so essential," he sighed to himself as he walked captive by Lady Judith's side, "they make men very unmanly. If I should not shock Mrs. Grundy too irremediably, I should exclaim boldly, 'I shan't stay with you, Lady Judith,' instead of remaining *volens volens*. My brothers would all find a way out of the difficulty, they have each more tact than I."

It did not seem to strike Eric that they were not the balt that he was.

"Shall I get some twine for you, Mr. North?" asked Lady Judith. "But who is this stout party making towards us? I verily believe she has designs on you."

He looked up with a faint hope of release. It was Mrs. Graham.

Puffing and panting she walked straight to Eric, totally ignoring Lady Judith, to whom she had not been introduced.

"Mr. North, have you seen my daughter?" she gasped. "I quite thought she was under your care."

"She is with—Miss Graham, I believe, is with my brother, Captain North, in the lower garden."

"With Captain North!" exclaimed Mrs. Graham, emphasizing the word captain, and looking unutterable things. "Oh, Mr. North!"

Anything more expressive than her tones it would be difficult to conceive. She evidently regarded the captain as dangerous. She would have him marked so.

Eric found consolation in Mrs. Graham's sympathy; it was just what he wanted in that moment. He felt anxious—she apparently felt more.

It was with satisfaction Eric saw the good lady amble off after her daughter. He set to mending Lady Judith's racket with redoubled effort.

"What a very vulgar woman!" declared Lady Judith, who had reasons of her own for not wishing the pretty Miss Graham to appear on the scenes again.

"There you are mistaken, Lady Judith," declared Eric, giving all his attention to the racket handle. "Mrs. Graham cannot be vulgar, her family is of the best. She is descended from the Grants of Dethly."

"Oh!" retorted Lady Judith, vaguely, "then I must be mistaken!"

But she had no more notion than the man in the moon who the Grants of Dethly were. The very gardener who claimed his descent from Adam had the advantage with her there. But then Lady Judith's genealogical studies beyond the peerage were very limited.

### CHAPTER III.

"HAD we not better be going back, Captain North," inquired Sybil Graham, anxiously.

"There is no hurry, yet; that is, if you are not tired!"

"I am not at all tired; but—" she hesitated, not liking to add, "mamma bade me keep away from you."

It suited Captain North to be dense.

"Oh, then, if you are sure you are not fatigued, do come on. There are several things in the garden I wish you to see."

Without giving her time to demur he led the way. Her indignation coalesced with his. She knew she had promised her mother to avoid "that fascinating captain;" but there was no getting rid of him without entering into explanations that were dangerous, so she quieted her conscience by following.

Once or twice she made a feeble effort to turn back, but Captain North would not see it. He meant to win her for his own ere they returned to the house. Warily, cautiously, he led up to the subject near his heart.

"Oh, Captain North, there is no one within sight but me!" exclaimed Sybil, in alarm. "Do let us join the rest."

"What have the others to do with me!" he asked, significantly. "Can you not trust yourself—your happiness, with me!"

Sybil grew agitated. "I—I—dare say I—I could," she faltered; "but—"

"Will you not do so, then! Oh, Sybil, don't you see how I love you! I have never seen any girl anywhere to win me as you have done!"

He paused. "Please talk about something else," she pleaded, her hands twining together in her excitement.

"By Jove," commented Stanley, "she looks prettier than ever. I must win her—*coute que coute*!"

"Why should I talk on any subject now that I have the chance, save the one nearest to both our hearts? I shall not be here long, Sybil."

Her hands ceased their movement. She grew calmer.

"Shall you not?" she queried, looking up into his face, shyly. A glance which he returned with interest. Her eyes fell beneath the passion of his.

"I must have you for my wife, Sybil," he said, taking her hand. "What a pretty little wife you will make. You are not angry! Oh, Sybil, my darling, be kind," her head dropped. "Do not you—cannot you love me!" he asked, insistingly.

"It is not—I mean I—oh, what shall I say?" sobbed poor Sybil. "I could, could love you; but—"

"But your mamma will not allow you," said Captain North, finishing her sentence. "Is that it?"

"How did you—how could you possibly guess?" exclaimed Sybil in wonderment.

Captain North might have answered that Mrs. Graham's tactics in regard to winning his eldest brother were plainly visible, as were also her distrust and disapproval of him, but he merely answered,—

"Never mind the why and the wherefore. Suffice it that I know pretty well how the land lies. You do not hate me, Sybil?"

"Indeed, no," she declared, with alacrity. She felt much less timid and confused since she had found that Captain North was aware of her mother's opinion.

"Do you love me just a little bit?" he asked, banding his head until it was on a level with hers.

"I—I'm afraid I do; but mamma—"

"We will not talk about mamma; answer my question. Sybil, do you love me?"

She grew agitated again.

"I do," she answered at last in a low tone.

"My darling!" he exclaimed, seizing her, and imprinting kisses on her cheeks, her lips, her brow.

"Oh, but Captain North," she entreated, "you must not! Mamma would be so angry if she—"

"But Mrs. Graham will have to be talked over. Every girl has a right to choose the husband she likes. You love me. Your mother wishes you to marry Eric! Ah! you start. I know all about it, you see; but we will it otherwise. I shall talk to your mother. I will make matters smooth. Trust me, darling!"

"Are you sure," asked Sybil, looking into his face, eagerly. "Is it possible that you can win her round? Oh, Captain North do you mean?"

"Of course I do," he answered, steadily.

"How clever you are! Quite a rock of strength!"

"Just so, in my Sybil's defence, because I love her."

"Do you really and truly love me?"

"Really and truly; does it seem strange?"

"It does somehow, because mamma—but there, I will not say. Only I never dared to hope you could win her round. Are you certain you can?"

"Quite certain I will; but Sybil, who is that coming towards us?"

He knew quite well.

"It is—oh! Stanley, it is mamma. She will

be so angry. Oh! I am afraid at once. What must I do? Will you ask her now?"

"Don't, my darling, cling like that. It impedes my movements. Are you really afraid? Well, perhaps, it would be as well to keep dark on the subject until nearer the end of my visit. Will you slip through this side door, cross the bridge on the other side, walk down the lovers' lane, as we call the beech walk, and join the rest."

He was pushing her hurriedly out of sight as he spoke. Sybil would have remonstrated, but ere she had time the door was closed behind her, and she found herself in a large field beyond the grounds.

Captain North walked leisurely towards Mrs. Graham directly he was alone. To gain time and composure he stooped every now and then, apparently to examine the beauty of some plant.

"Meddlesome old quaker," he apostrophised. Not that Mrs. Graham belonged to that sect, but merely because it was a favourite expression of his.

"Oh, Cap—tain North!" panted the good lady, as she reached him. "Where is my daughter?"

"Your daughter," exclaimed Stanley, in a tone that implied he had not seen her for ages. "I am sure I cannot tell you. Oh! she is playing tennis with Eric."

Mrs. Graham stared at him in astonishment. Could he be speaking as he thought, or was his manner the perfection of good acting?

"She is not on the tennis ground, Captain, and that I was led to suppose you knew. Did not Sybil accompany you into the garden?"

"Have you seen Eric?" queried Captain North, parrying the question. "Let me help you to find her! It is impossible that the pretty Miss Graham can be lost for long."

"But I thought—I am sure—I saw a lady with you, Captain," persisted Mrs. Graham. "I know my sight is defective, yet not so bad as to play me as false as that."

"A lady with me!" reiterated Stanley, in amusement. "Then where has she vanished? Has she melted like a wraith into air?"

"I am sure I saw a female's dress through the trees," declared Mrs. Graham.

"Then that lady must be in hiding. Suppose you take my arm, and we prosecute a search together!"

Mrs. Graham declined the arm. She felt in her heart that the Captain was poking fun at her. Yet she was not going to be done out of a search.

"If he is speaking an untruth," cogitated the lady, "he is the most unblushing storyteller I have ever known. Somehow I do not trust him even in that."

"You are going to look then?" observed the Captain. "May I accompany you?"

"Certainly. Ah! Captain, what door is that?" as they reached the one through which Sybil had passed.

"Oh, this! Well, really, do you know I cannot say, I am so little at home. It leads probably into a tool-house or potting-shed."

The Captain rather overdid his acting there.

"What! born and bred on the place and not know every nook and corner of it," said Mrs. Graham, incredulously. "Come, Captain North, I can hardly credit that."

He bowed.

"I cannot give you faith in my word if you have reason to doubt it," he said. "I always let a lady keep to her opinion."

Mrs. Graham was busily engaged poking her parasol on the door, and did not hear what he said.

"This sounds hollow," she declared, "that is, there is no building on the other side."

"Let me open it!" proffered Stanley, going forward, as if to do so.

Yet he was well aware that it was locked, and the key safely stowed away in his pocket.

"She could not have disappeared that way at any rate," observed Mrs. Graham, with satisfaction.

"I begin to see I was wrong, Captain North. I will return to the house!"

He smiled to himself at the way he had

deceived her, and resolved to whisper a word of caution to Sybil not to betray his behaviour.

But it so happened that amongst the guests that day assembled at Nest Bank was a young man, named Walker, who was addicted to fits. He was generally warned of their approach, and then kept himself secluded. But every rule has an exception. So it proved on that occasion about the fits. One came on unexpectedly and threw some of the ladies into hysterics. Stanley's help was not required for Walker, but he was invaluable in restoring calm to the upset nerves.

"Do not go away, Captain," implored a lady in blue spectacles. "I shall not feel safe if you leave us."

Thus petitioned, what was he to do? Moreover, having so much of the subtlety of the wolf about himself, he accredited Sybil with something of the same nature, whereas she in reality possessed but the innocence of the dove.

She was sitting in a large marquee with a party of others when Mrs. Graham walked up to her.

"Sybil, where have you been?" she asked, after bestowing a nod on one or two of her acquaintances.

"Been—where have I been! Me, do you mean?"

"You, certainly. Where have you been hiding since you finished your tennis?"

"I—have not been hiding, mamma, at least—remembering her recent escapade—" not exactly.

"But where have you been? Do not prevaricate, child."

Sybil put down her cup and rose.

"I will walk with you, mamma, if you wish to question me," she said, a crimson glow suffusing her face.

"I do not wish to disturb you now, but tell me, have you been in that lower garden"—pointing to it—"with Captain North?"

People began to chatter. Sybil raised her pretty face to her mother's.

"Supposing I have, mamma," she replied, rather defiantly, "what then?"

"Nothing. I but request a truthful answer."

"I have been. He asked me. I could not well refuse, and—"

"How long have you left him?" interrogated the lady, without waiting for the end of her daughter's sentence.

"Five or ten minutes ago."

"You ran away from me, then?"

Sybil was obliged to confess that such had been the case.

"How did you effect your escape?" persevered Mrs. Graham.

Sybil felt uncomfortably hot.

"I—I—went through a doorway into the field; but mamma, sit down, and ask me more when I get home."

"Did you lock the doorway after you?"

"Indeed, no. I hurried round as quickly as I could. I—"

"Thank you. Now, Sybil, come with me. We are going home. I shall go to Mr. North and ask him to order my carriage. You are not able to take care of yourself, I see; so, until you are handed over into a husband's keeping, I must be responsible for you. Good afternoon, ladies!"

Mrs. Graham called out of the marquee; her daughter followed unwillingly in her wake.

"I am afraid that Mrs. Graham is a regular martinet," remarked one lady.

"She has to keep a strict lock-out on her daughter," was the answer. "I believe the girl is rich. She is certainly very pretty, and many would be glad to get her. Mrs. Graham is right to frustrate them. Doubtless, she has a great love for her only child."

"She might show it in a nicer way than by displaying temper before a whole lot of people. Makes the girl feel so small, I should think."

Which fact was so apparently indisputable that there was no one who contradicted it.

#### CHAPTER IV.

THREADING their way among the guests, few of whom they knew, being but recently new



comes into the neighbourhood, the Gramhams walked towards the house. Few words passed between mother and daughter; the one being too indignant for conversation, the other too sorrowful.

"Are we not to say good-bye to anyone, mamma?" queried Sybil, anxiously. She longed to set eyes on Stanley ere their departure, little guessing what a storm there would be should he and her mother meet just then. Luckily, the Captain was not in view.

"Our best plan will be to slip off quietly," answered Mrs. Graham, "otherwise our leaving before tea might cause unpleasant remarks." Her anger was dying away sufficiently to allow of her seeing what was diplomatic.

"Wherever can the Squire be?" groaned the stout lady, despairingly. "Ah! here is Mr. Eric, he will do."

Eric, who had been with Lady Judith—who, by the way, along to his vicinity with leech-like tenacity—hurried forward to meet Sybil.

"Is anything wrong?" he asked, quickly. He saw a troubled look on the sweet face that he did not like to note there.

"It is rather warm!" replied Mrs. Graham, smiling benignantly on the heir, who was a special favourite of hers. It was on the tip of his tongue to reply—

"You look so"—but he stopped himself in time.

When a lady looks so hot that her face bears a close resemblance to a boiled lobster, it is always best to pass such remarks over, and so Eric decided.

"Have you tried the claret cup?" he asked. "Let me get you some; it's very cooling."

Mrs. Graham waved her hand.

"Not now, thanks, we must get home. May I trouble you to order my carriage, Mr. North?"

"But you will not take Miss Sybil," pleaded Eric, eagerly.

Mrs. Graham hesitated.

Sybil's heart began to beat with hope.

"I think I would rather she accompanied me," was her answer at last. "She can come some other time when"—that scamp is out of the way, was what she nearly said, but substituted—"your house is quieter."

A great yearning went into Eric's eyes. He looked at the fair girl wistfully—longingly. Sybil, glancing about in indifference did not catch the glances. Her mother did, and a sigh of content went from her bosom. It only needed diplomacy, and all would yet go as she wished.

A footman passed with a tray towards the tent. Mr. North ordered Mrs. Graham's carriage, and returned to her side.

"Miss Graham, I am sorry to lose you!" observed Eric.

The girl smiled.

"So is she sorry to go," declared Mrs. Graham.

"If I—I might—" began Eric—but words failed him.

Then, under cover of Mrs. Graham's broad back, which was turned on them, and made a convenient shield from the lawn, he took Sybil's hand, and said—

"May I come and see you to-morrow? I—I have a question I should like to ask."

Sybil wondered rather at his awkward manner, simply because she had no knowledge of the great love that was consuming his heart.

"Certainly, Mr. North!" she said. "Mamma and I will always be pleased to see you."

"Will you be pleased," he asked, eagerly.

No heightened colour rose on the fair cheeks as it ever did at Stanley's last words.

"I shall be very pleased!" she answered, simply.

That was enough to set Eric's loyal heart bounding in happiness. He seemed to tread on air, when he afterwards led his darling to her carriage, and as he wrapped the rug round her he managed to whisper—

"Expect me to-morrow at eleven!" Raising his hat to both, he stood and watched them bowled swiftly away.

"My wooing will soon be over!" he cogitated, rounding the house, and making for the lawn; "and sweet Sybil be my pretty wife."

"What can Mr. North have to say, mamma?" queried Sybil, lying back amongst the cushions.

"He seemed so strange, and he is coming to ask me something at eleven to-morrow!" she asked, languidly. Mr. North and his affairs were a matter of perfect indifference to her. But she was roused out of her apathy by the effect her words had on her mother.

Bounding up in the carriage, she exclaimed exuberantly—

"Is he coming? Did he say so? Oh! Sybil, my precious girl, I am a proud woman. You are going to have an offer from the prospective master of Nest Bank."

"Round home by the Point, Jackson; we are in no hurry, and may as well have a long drive. Sybil, my dearest, my hopes and fears as to your future are set at rest. What a suitable match it will be."

She stooped and kissed her daughter, and then sank back into her seat. Sybil's lips trembled, large tears welled into her blue eyes. Mrs. Graham affected not to see them.

"But, mamma! I—I could not. I never could marry—"

"My sweetest girl!" interrupted her mother, diplomatically. "You think you could not care for Eric. We always think so just when an offer is made to us. I felt the same when your dear father proposed, but—"

"Oh! it is not that," exclaimed Sybil in distress. "I never could accept Mr. North, because I—I love someone else."

"That is a mere girlish fancy—a passing whim," declared Mrs. Graham, sternly.

"But I—but he—oh! mamma," said Sybil, drooping her head, "Captain North—"

"Don't mention that man's name to me," broke in Mrs. Graham, impulsively. He is a scamp, a—"

Sybil stood in great awe of her mother. She had a timid, distrustful nature, ever leaning on a stronger for support, but for once her love braced her, and she declared indignantly—

"Mamma! how can you speak of Captain North that way?"

"I speak as I find people!" was the cool reply. "Captain North, as a son of Benjamin North, of Nest Bank, ought to be a gentleman. He will, I suppose, always be received in society, as such, but never by me. I don't like him. There is much of the adventurer in his nature; he is untrue, false. He shall be no son of mine. More, I forbid his name ever being mentioned between us again. I could tell you a tale about his behaviour to a poor girl on your Uncle Leonard's estate; but your ears are too pure for such recitals—your heart too innocent. You will learn the world's wickedness quickly enough. Meanwhile, be thankful at having gained the affection of a true-hearted, honest Englishman in your own position, and accept him gratefully."

Sybil sobbed as if her heart was breaking.

"I—I love the other," she said.

"So you think now. The Captain is specious, and wins hearts by the score. He fires soon of every fresh conquest, and throws each over in turn carelessly."

"But he—he has asked me—me—"

"You don't mean, Sybil, that Captain North has asked you to be his wife?" interrogated Mrs. Graham, anxiously.

"I do; and he has promised to win your consent, and—"

"There, that will do!" burst in Mrs. Graham, indignantly. "And nicely he sets about keeping his promise, sending you off through a field to find your way to the house, whilst he meets me, and—and—deceives me," concludes the frate lady, too wrathful to find words to express herself in.

"But he—"

"That will do. I will not have the scamp's name mentioned."

"Mr. North is so—ugly, and his brother so handsome," perorated Sybil, jerking her words out between fresh sobs.

"Handsome is that handsome does. Mr. North may not have as winning an appearance as his brother's, but his heart is worth twenty of that false Captain's. Think of the difference in their position, too."

"Mamma, I have position enough, and money enough too to marry whom I choose," urged Sybil. "And one son cannot be so much higher than another when they both belong to the same family."

"Sybil!" declared Mrs. Graham, emphatically. "I shall argue no further with you. You shall not marry Captain North, of that I am resolved—not if you move heaven and earth to accomplish it. Your money is fixed on you solely at my power. If you marry against my will you are penniless!"

"I should not mind that."

"No, I believe you. In your foolish infatuation, you would give up everything to take your own choice, but I shall not let you. Neither, let me remind you, would Captain North. He may love you with such love as hearts like his are capable of, but he loves money better. Now let the subject end. To-morrow you will accept Mr. North, or there will be war in the camp."

"Mamma, forgive me for saying more!" exclaimed Sybil, unhappily. "But if I give up Captain North, do not oblige me to marry the other against my will. Girls have a right to decline whom they choose."

"Very well," sighed Mrs. Graham. "I leave the decision entirely to you; but, mark my words, reject this kind-hearted, genial Mr. Eric, and you will live to repent it!"

No further conversation passed between the two for the remainder of the drive. Each head was busy with its plans. Mrs. Graham's whole energies were spent on thinking how to beat circumvent Captain North, and make her daughter's future safe.

Sybil's whole heart was bent on seeing the best way to gaining him. She had great faith in her lover's powers, and depended much on the confident way in which he had promised to win her mother's good-will.

"I shall write and tell him he must see her at once," commented the girl, hopefully.

"How I wish her father had lived!" soliloquised Mrs. Graham. "But I will not lose heart. He trusted her future happiness unreservedly to my discretion, and I will see if I cannot accomplish it."

That night's post took two letters away from the Manor House. One from Mrs. Graham to Benjamin North, Esq., the other from Sybil to the Captain. The latter might never have gone had Mrs. Graham believed her daughter capable of penning an epistle to a gentleman. No such suspicion, however, had ever entered her mother's head.

## CHAPTER V.

CAPTAIN NORTH was busily shaving, the next morning. His man-servant was in the room, moving about.

"Peter, you can go away until I ring."

Peter saluted like the soldier he was, and departed.

"Confound it!" exclaimed Stanley, taking up a letter that he had before read. "My pretty little Sybil is going to spoil all by her precipitancy. If she is not careful, I shall get kicked out of the house. My previous conduct won't bear inspection, or I'd go and ask openly for her to-day. We must wait—wait. So Eric is going to propose at eleven, is he? Well, I flatter myself I've stolen a march on him there. Who the deuce is that banging at my door that way? Come in!" he shouted angrily.

"Aye, Mr. Stanley, I am coming," answered his father, entering, angrily. "What kind of a tone is that to use to a father, pray! But, bother it, your manner is nothing in comparison to that. Just read it," throwing a letter to him.

Stanley's brow darkened as he perused Mrs. Graham's epistle. He frowned awfully.

"It is false—false!" he exclaimed.

But even as he spoke he knew that facts were stated in that letter which would not bear inspection, and which would therefore necessitate his speedy departure from home—and Sybil!

"It is easy to deny things," declared the

Squire, excitedly, "but can you prove her statements untrue?"

"I will do so," answered Stanley, untruthfully, "or shoot myself."

But his brow grew gloomier.

"It is absurd talking that way. Of course you will give up all thoughts of Miss Graham, seeing that her mother is so opposed to the match, even if that charge about Naomie Hunt is not true!"

"I do not see that."

"You do not see," broke in the Squire intemperately; "but I do. I shall write and inquire into this fearful charge against you. If it is true you can clear off out of my house instantly, and your allowance shall be stopped. If it is false, you shall out Madam Graham, and—"

"Then it strikes me that the best course I can adopt under the circumstances is to leave at once, for I cannot really see what is to be gained by remaining. As for Mrs. Graham and your cutting her and her daughter, you stand much chance of doing so when your eldest son—your hope, your heir, is over head and ears in love with the latter."

The Squire bounced as if shot.

"Say that again," he yelled, "and I'll knock you down!"

Captain North sneered.

The expression of his face had been most unpleasant throughout the interview. No one seeing him then could possibly have deemed him handsome.

"Say it again!" roared the Squire, dancing about in his fury.

"Really, father, taking the alternative into consideration, I really must decline."

"But what authority had you for using such words?" demanded the Squire, growing calmer.

He was longing, yet dreading, further information.

"I am not one of those who speak without my book," replied Stanley coolly. "Eric is going to the Manor this morning to propose to Sybil."

The Squire was furious.

"Your authority!" he yelled.

"Sybil's word. He is to be there at eleven."

"But I'll never allow it! I won't stand it!" roared Mr. North, senior. "I tell you it shan't be!"

"Spare your heroics for Eric, then," retorted the Captain coolly. "I have had enough of these scenes. If you will leave the room I will ring for Peter to pack. Ta, ta, father, in case we never meet again."

Mr. North stopped suddenly in the midst of a bounce round the room, and stared open-mouthed at his son.

The audacity of the Captain's behaviour literally deprived him of breath.

"You need not look so bewildered, father," declared Stanley calmly, "the situation is easy to grasp. But had I been in your place I should have begged the third son to have stayed at home, so that he might have outwitted the heir, especially with your ambition to gain Lady Judith."

The Squire deliberated.

"There is a good deal of sense in your argument, Stanley," declared Mr. North, recovering his temper all at once, and responding eagerly to his son's suggestion. "Stay at home, Stanley, and—and—help me. I'll—"

Captain North only wished he had dared. But the answer to all inquiries on his account he well knew could only be too damning. So, like many more, he made a virtue of necessity, and replied,—

"You must excuse me, father, but really your treatment has been too severe for me to overlook it at present. My feelings are too deeply wounded to forgive all at once in the way your passionate sort do. I may get extension of leave, and if so I will pay you a visit by-and-by."

Mr. North waited to hear no more, but rushed out of the room.

In the corridor he happened to meet one of the maid-servants. She would have bolted out of sight, according to one of the rules of the house that no maid domestic was to be seen

doing the housework. Her master frustrated her intention by calling out,—

"Here, Mary, Betsy, Sarah, Jane, Eliza, or whatever your name, go and tell the butler that in future no one in this house is at home to Mrs. Graham."

The girl dropped a curtsy.

"Do you understand!" demanded the master sharply.

"Yes, sir; but which Mrs. Graham?" roared the Squire. "Go and tell your message. But what are you staring at, girl! I have not told you to fetch the moon!"

Mary hurried off to execute her bidding. "Please, Mr. Turbott," she said, addressing the butler, "master's orders is as Mrs. Graham is never to be admitted no more into this 'ere mansion."

Mr. Turbott was a big man, and quite as important in his own eyes, if not more so, than his master.

"Which is Mrs. Gra'am?" he asked loudly.

"Master would not say."

"Then go and tell Simon—it's 'is business to answer the door—that neither of the Mrs. Gra'am's is to be shown in. Stay, no; now I come to think of it, that Mrs. at Shereloft is very 'igh and mighty, I'll pay 'er 'orfil. Bid Simon be rude to 'er."

"Yes, sir," acquiesced Mary, willingly. And she sped on her errand.

Mr. North, after giving directions for Mrs. Graham's discomfiture, walked to Eric's bedroom. It was empty.

"He will be in the garden enjoying the flowers, I'll be bound," cogitated the Squire. "Ten minutes to breakfast," consulting his watch. "Ten minutes will be long enough to say all I want, and it will perhaps give us both a better appetite for that meal."

Eric was in the garden enjoying the fragrance of the roses. His thoughts were filled with happiness. There was only one drawback—the fear of his father's displeasure; for Eric knew only too well the ambition the Squire entertained for him in connection with Lady Judith Penrhyn.

"But this is a question on which no man can mar his son's life," commented the heir. "I shall go to him and speak out directly I have gained my Sybil's consent."

Just as he arrived at that conclusion he caught sight of his father hurrying towards him, spade in hand as usual.

"Here, Eric!" shouted the Squire as if there was not a moment to be lost, "a word with you."

Those "words" with Eric, in connection with Lady Judith, had recently been so incessant that the heir might be forgiven if he heaved a sigh as he answered,—

"All right, father."

But the Squire's look betokened anything rather than a clear atmosphere as he reached Eric.

"Here I say," he blurted out suddenly, "what do you mean by daring to go against my orders! You know I have set my mind on your marrying Lady Judith. Yet, in exact opposition, you're gone, I'm told, and fallen in love with that painted doll, Sybil Graham."

"Father," exclaimed Eric warmly, "Sybil is no painted doll, she is fair and pure as an angel. She—"

"Bless my soul!" cried the Squire in exasperation, "then I was told truly. You love the girl."

"Who was your informant?"

"What is that to you?" retorted Mr. North fiercely. "Do you love Miss Graham?"

"I do, father, with all my heart. I have not a hope of happiness in which she is not bound up. I—"

"You dare tell me this to my face!" interrupted the Squire. "You dare! I will disinherit you! I—"

He paused for lack of words.

"You will scarcely do that," replied Eric, his calm, unruffled manner, rendered more striking by contrast. "You were ever just; let us talk the matter over quietly."

"That I shall never do. You must marry Lady Judith! You shall! Why, she even knows my views. You would not disgrace me!"

"Never! Trust me, I shall never bring a slur on your name. But, father, forgive me, I cannot obey you in this respect. I do not even like Lady Judith, how, then, could I marry her! Moreover, I love sweet Sybil with all the fervour of my manhood! I—"

"Do stop your twaddle!" burst in Mr. North, angrily. "When a man gets to thirty-five, or nearly so, as you have done, he is supposed to be able to make a choice with wisdom. Love is for youths and foolish girls in their teens. I— What do you say?" He twirled round suddenly as he ended, and faced Simon.

"Mrs. Graham, from the Manor House, is in the drawing-room."

"I thought I gave directions that that woman was not to be admitted!" yelled the Squire, frantically. "Go and turn her out! I won't see her! I— What can she want by coming at this unearthly hour! What are you standing shivering there for like a great dummy, you gawky Simon!"

"Am I to turn the lady out, sir!" gasped Simon.

"No," interrupted Eric. "My father will—"

For answer, the Squire rushed off. Sooner than argue the question he was prepared to expel Mrs. Graham himself.

Eric stood in indecision a moment. What could he do? he asked himself. Mrs. Graham must not be insulted at all hazards; yet how to prevent it was the question. Mr. North in his passionate irascibility was as uncontrollable as a mad bull. Thought came to his aid. Taking out a pencil, he wrote hurriedly on the back of an old envelope,—

"DEAR MADAM,—Pray make every allowance for my father, I beg of you. He has been fearfully put out this morning.—ERIC NORTH."

"Run with that, Simon, round by the side door—quick!"

Simon would have had no chance of overtaking his master; but luckily the distance he had to go was far shorter, and he accomplished his errand successfully.

"For you, ma'am," exclaimed he, excitedly, handing Mrs. Graham the note. Then he turned precipitately, with more anxiety than politeness, and made a bolt for it. The Squire, lying in at the door, cannoned against his servant. Confusion ensued.

"Bless my heart!" shouted Mr. North, recovering. "What was that! St—mon!" in astonishment, "can that be you?"

Simon was rubbing his leg ruefully, his face as long as a fiddle. He expected warning on the spot.

The situation was too much for Mrs. Graham. She stood twirling the note—unconsciously, perhaps—in her hand. Tears of laughter rolled down her cheeks. Perhaps, too, she wondered what the scene all meant. She had not read Eric's request.

The Squire turned from Simon and looked at his early caller. Her merriment was infectious. He forgot everything, and joined in her laughter.

"Ha! ha! Bless my heart! Ha! ha! Simon," he cried, as soon as he could speak, "how did you get here! You thought to forestal me, I expect, and I— Oh, my alder! how they ache!" he stood upright, trying to recover himself.

His hot fit of passion, always of short duration, had quite evaporated; but, as if ashamed to own as much, he assumed a stern tone.

"Simon, sir," he began severely, "I thought I— but, turning, he saw the footman had gone.

Mrs. Graham advanced, her hand outstretched.

The Squire affected not to see it. Bowing stiffly, he said,—

"Madam, to what am I indebted for the— the honour—ahem! of this early interview!"

Not a feature of the lady's was ruffled at



the reception. She seemed, somehow, prepared for it.

"I must confess," continued the Squire, "that I have taken exception at the letter I read from you this morning. I—"

Mrs. Graham took a seat; she waved Mr. North to one also, but he resented it.

"Oh, that is it! Ah, I am enlightened! You are not one of those who care for the truth, Mr. North."

He wriggled uncomfortably.

"Of course I do," he answered stiffly; "but your—"

"My communication was strictly reliable. Will you summon Captain North? I can substantiate every word."

The Squire had a very strong impression that Stanley would refuse to come. Moreover, he was not particularly anxious to have it proved that his third son was a villain, so he replied,—

"I fear he could not come just now, Mrs. Graham; but as I share with you a strong feeling against any marriage between your daughter and him we can settle the matter in a more summary way."

"That is well," acquiesced Mrs. Graham. "I am glad we are united on one point. But I have come to arrange a more important affair. I, by half an hour's conversation, I—but are you ill, Mr. North?"

She might well ask, his face had gone livid. Was there no getting rid of the woman? He asked, his passion rising hotly. He could not openly turn her out of his house. The only other alternative was to leave her presence himself.

"You must excuse me just now, I have not yet had my breakfast," he said, hurriedly.

"Go and get it by all means," declared the irrepressible lady. "I will take a book and await your return."

Directly she was alone she opened Eric's note.

"Kind of him," she laughed, "but I am not so thin-skinned as he thinks. I came to have war to the knife if necessary, and I am prepared to have it. He'll cool down when he learns all."

"Bother the woman!" commented the Squire as he trotted off to his breakfast. "But I'll let her wait; I'll—I'll tire her out. But what is the important affair she— Why, bless me!" with sudden recollection, "surely she's not guessed Eric's infatuation! She'd never have the audacity to expect to get the heir of Nest Bank for that doll-faced miss! I'll let her know if she has. Who are the Grants of Dethly? I'm sure I don't know, and I don't care. My son is to marry Lady Judith, or—or—I'll eat my head. Oh, the presumption of some people!" and the Squire went purple in the face again with anger.

(To be continued.)

## THE FIRST CRUSADE.

—101—

ROBERT BLAINE paced up and down the small room that had been the especial sanctum of his brother-in-law, Dick Hatten, his brows knitted in perplexed thought, his fingers nervously rattling his watch-chain. Mary, his only sister, Dick's widow, was sobbing on the sofa.

"Mary, dear," he said, presently, "it is cruel to make you talk, but if I could only get some really clear idea of the business, I might, perhaps, help you."

Mary sat up, and tried to still the sobs that the talk about her husband—not yet a month dead—had called forth. She was a woman with fair hair and blue eyes, and young enough still to make her deep widow's mourning doubly pathetic.

"About the house?" she said.

"Yes. You say it is almost paid for?"

"The price was £1,500 for the house and grounds. There is a very large orchard and vegetable garden, besides the garden in front. Dick was to pay for it just as he could, but not less than sixty pounds a year. We were so

anxious to have a home of our own, Rob, that we worked very hard for it, and that is the reason I know all about it. I put all my writing money in, too; not much to be sure, but it helped along."

"And you are sure there was £1,000 paid to Mr. Sharp?"

"I am positively certain of it."

"And the receipts are lost?"

"Lost! Gone entirely. Rob, I never dared say it, for I cannot prove it, but I firmly believe Mr. Sharp stole Dick's receipt-book."

"Why?"

"Well, he is a man who is not much respected, and there have been several stories told about him that throw a doubt over his honesty. Still, he keeps clear of the law. Dick took the receipts for the payment of the house in a small red account-book that had nothing else in it. That day—no, I am not going to try again, dear—that dreadful day he sent word to Mr. Sharp that he would pay him fifty pounds. He had sold a lot of wool, and I had twenty pounds saved. I know he had it when Mr. Sharp came. Then there was that dreadful hemorrhage, and how could we think of anything but Dick for the next three days. But, Rob, Mr. Sharp was alone with him when he was taken ill, and gave the alarm. There was nothing to prevent his slipping the receipt-book into his pocket, and I believe he did it. It cannot be found, and Mr. Sharp would not dare to assert that he has never been paid anything but rent for the house if he did not know I cannot produce the receipts."

"H'm! Yes, I see. But one cannot accuse a man of such a crime as that without some proof."

"I understand that. I think he intended, if Dick got better, to pretend it was a mistake, or he might have meant to cheat him."

"Was there never any witness to the payments?"

"No. He would come over, or Dick would go to him and pay whatever we could spare. But I have seen the receipts often! And think, Rob, how that thousands pounds would help me now!"

Rob did think of it! He was a young man who had made for himself a home in a distant country, over which he had asked his widowed sister to preside. He had come to her with open hands and heart to offer a home to her and her two boys, knowing that his brother-in-law had lived upon his salary as a clerk in a wholesale house. But he had found that these two, by close economy, by Dick's careful speculation, and Mary's contributions to magazine literature, had nearly secured a home of their own, when a sudden rupture of a blood-vessel had ended life for one, and left the other desolate.

Many long talks the brother and sister had about this cruel wrong pressing upon her, but arriving always at the conclusion that only the finding of the receipt-book could help her. They were still talking in the room that Dick had devoted to his wife's literary labours and his own business affairs, and dignified by the name of library, when Rob, pointing to the wall, said:

"Where on earth did you ever get that horrid daub, Mary! What is it?"

"The First Crusade," said Mary, smiling. "It is a daub, Rob, but Dick was fond of it for the sake of his only brother, who painted it. Poor boy! He imagined himself a great artist, and this picture a masterpiece. But after vainly trying to sell it he gave it to Dick. It was a dreadful job to get it up, and you see it takes all the space on that side of the room. How we are to get it down is a mystery."

"Do you value it?"

"No. I scarcely knew Jim; he died ten years ago, and the picture is frightful."

"H'm!—I think I see a light!" said Rob, musingly. "Well, dear, as there is nothing to be gained by staying here, how soon will you be ready to go to Woodside with me?"

"I will begin to pack to-day."

It proved to be a tedious job to gather all the household goods into travelling compass, to start off box after box, to take leave of neighbours, and

make preparations for the long journey and new home. But Mary found comfort in constant work, and the next week most of her packing was finished.

But the day before that appointed for their start, Rob sent for Mr. Sharp, to make one more appeal to his honesty. There was a long, rather stormy interview in the dismantled library, where only the huge painting and two chairs had been left. Rob had left the room under some pretence of questioning his sister, and Mr. Sharp was peeping about in a Paul Pry way that Mary had told her brother was habitual with him when he made a discovery. There was an ugly space in a recess, where Dick Hatten's stationary desk had stood for ten long years against the wall. Scraps of paper and string, torn envelopes, all the debris of packing, were scattered about, but wedged into the top of the mop board was an envelope, almost concealed, that Mr. Sharp was sure contained an inclosure. Wearily he crept up to it, seized it, and found it a sealed envelope, directed,—

"To MARY my wife. To be opened only after my death."

He crammed it hastily into his pocket, and when Rob returned took his departure. Something important must be in that paper, that had evidently slipped out of the desk when it was moved and escaped observation. But the disclosure was a startling one. Without any scruple of honour or honesty, Mr. Sharp broke the seal and read:—

"DEAR MARY,

"It has been long known to you, dear, that my life was a precarious one, and you will not be surprised that I have made a little provision for you and the children. Poor Jim left me £2,000 in United States bonds, and unwilling to trust it to any bank, I have hidden it away in the lower right-hand corner of the picture he gave me. The interest will run on until you take the envelope from its hiding-place, as no one else will ever move the picture. Forgive me for keeping this one secret from you."

"DICK."

No one else! Why, they might tear it down at any moment. A cold sweat broke out all over the rascal's body. All his hoarded wealth, the result of scheming, cheating, saving, was as nothing compared to this newly-discovered treasure. Nobody else must find those bonds!

But when he returned to the house he found everything in hurried confusion, and Rob issuing hurried orders.

"I can't talk to you now," he said, as Mr. Sharp came up. "I am obliged to leave by the 7.30 P.M. train from B—, and it is nearly two o'clock now. There is still a van-load to go, and the children and Mary are getting dressed for the carriage at three o'clock."

"But I must speak to you."

"And that confounded picture has to be packed, too," cried Rob, bustling into the house. "Here, some of you fellows, bring a step-ladder!"

"No, no!" cried Mr. Sharp. "I—I came over to see if I couldn't buy that picture."

"Buy it!" Rob cried. "You might as well ask Mary to sell you one of her boys! Why, her dear brother-in-law painted it!"

"But it looks so well where it is and will be so awkward to move!" cried Mr. Sharp, watching with horror Rob's preparations to tear the painting from the wall. "I will give you a good price."

"How much! But I am sure Mary will never part with it!"

"Fifty pounds."

"Bah!"

"One hundred pounds."

"One hundred pounds for such a work of art as that! Why, man alive, if Mary ever could part with it, it ought to bring five times that sum!"

"Five times that sum! Five hundred pounds!" cried Mr. Sharp.

"Certainly," said Rob, coolly. "But we do not wish to sell it at all. Come, hurry up! Take out the top nails very carefully there."

"I'll give you five hundred pounds for it!"

cried Mr. Sharp, desperately, rapidly calculating the ten years' interest on the bonds.

"But we leave here in half-an-hour! You don't carry five hundred pounds round in your pocket, do you?"

"No, but I carry my cheque book. I'll give you a cheque!"

"Won't do! I cannot stop to cash it."

"I'll run over to the bank with it myself."

"Well, you haven't much time. You got the money, and I'll speak to Mary while you are gone. I'm not so sure she will take it!"

Off darted Mr. Sharp, and Rob hurried the last boxes on the van and sent it off just as the carriage drove up. Mary and the boys were already seated when Mr. Sharp came round the corner, actually carrying the money in his hands.

Very carefully Rob counted it, the crisp notes for each, that represented the exact sum that Dick had paid the rascally landlord for the house his widow was leaving.

"Correct!" he said, presently. "There is no need of a receipt. You can see the picture through the window. Good-bye!"

The carriage whirled off, and Mr. Sharp entered the empty house. The workmen had gone with the van, but when he pulled the corner of the canvas, he found it already loosened from the frame. A large yellow envelope, with three immense red seals, was behind it, and with trembling fingers he tore it open. A long slip of paper was the only enclosure, and, half-fainting, she disappeared to her room.

"This makes our account square."

## A SLAIN LOVE.

—10—

"SWEAR it, Mark!"

"I swear it, Nora!"

"That you love me even as I love you; that you will wait for me; that you will be my wife when I return! You swear it, Nora!"

"I do, solemnly. If I break my oath, may I never know an hour's happiness! But, oh, Mark, how I shall miss you! If you only did not have to leave me!"

"Would to Heaven I did not, Nora! But—but I leave my heart with you, dear, sunny-faced treasure; only be true—only do not forget or forsake me—and a day will come when there will be no parting for you or me. Darling, do you care so much? Will you miss me so?"

For the pretty face uplifted to his was quivering with sorrow, and the soft young eyes were brimming over with tears.

Gently, but with a deepening pallor on his face, Mark Joyce drew the wondrous lips and dew-laden eyes close against his breast.

It was hard to leave her, his fair young love; and to leave her so, not knowing when fortune's smile might permit him to return, was fraught with bitterness untold.

So he clasped her close, and held her fast for one long moment of passionate pain, then put her from him, to gaze long and wistfully on her face, to kiss it again and again, to murmur low, broken words of fondness.

And when at last he tore himself from the clinging of her pretty, slender hands, Nora Burt sobbed as though the heart in her breast was really broken.

It was over—the sweet, romantic love-dream which had lasted for a year. Mark Joyce's friend and protector, the kind old man who, through kindly remembrance of his dead father, had taken Mark into his home and heart when the orphaned boy was left desolate and penniless, was dead.

No will had been found, and distant relatives had come to claim the dead man's wealth.

Thus he had loved Mark fondly and for years, that he had called him his heir, counted for nothing; the young man found himself left penniless.

And even love—which had seemed so sure and fair a thing in his prosperity—was a new grief in his hour of trial; for Nora Burt was not a woman to cheer and strengthen a man in adverse hours,

but a sweet, clinging dependent creature, whose tears fell softly when she heard the story of his penury, and whose lips whispered only of her own sorrow, her own pain.

She flung herself down where Mark had left her, and sobbed on and on, in an abandonment which made one remember how young she was.

The day was still, the autumn sunlight rich and glowing.

When she lifted her tear-washed, youthful face, and pushed back the long tangle of her yellow hair, she first knew that she was not alone.

A tall, slender, delicate-looking youth stood near, his face full of concern and embarrassment.

"Are—are you ill?" he asked, eagerly. "Can I do anything for you?"

"No, I'm not ill," she said, plaintively, rising and drying her tears; "I'm in trouble, and you can't do anything for me at all."

"Trouble!"

He looked at the fair, slight, dainty creature, and wondered how trouble could touch so beautiful and young a girl; but she turned and left him without another word.

"He is one of those who have sent my Mark away from me," she said to herself, as she went from Rupert Kent. "I shall never like him. Mark should have had Otto Kent's money, and not he or his sister. I hate them!"

But childish hatreds, as childish loves, live briefly; and a month from that day of her parting with Mark she and Rupert Kent had grown very friendly.

Yes, and poor Mark, struggling to gain a footing in someone of the world's slippery places, often wondered, with a dull ache at his heart, why Nora wrote so rarely and so briefly.

She had sworn her love for him should never change; she must be true—his sweet girl love! But why into her letters did there creep a chill which seemed to reach his heart?

Bravely, strongly, he fought down the fear, but it grew with each passing season, and when a year had gone, and his foot was firm, his future looked secure, she wrote, asking for freedom.

They had been so young, she said in her letter—they had made a mistake; it would be wise to forget the folly, which she at least regretted, of their betrothal.

"Folly!"

He sent her back no word, but every little gift of hers went from him to her at once.

And then he heard that Rupert Kent and she were plighted.

"The king is dead! long live the king!" he said, bitterly. "Rupert Kent has now all things that once were mine—even the love of Nora!"

But his lips were white as he said the words, and the olden love tore fiercely at the heart it lived in.

For another year he received no word, and then, with bright, worldly prospects before him, but that dull ache in his heart still, he heard that on the very eve of his bridal Rupert Kent had died.

She was free again; might not the old love rise now and live once more in her bosom? Might not he find it as fair as once he found it, despite of all the past pain and fierce yearning of his heart for true affection?

"I will see her face again," he told himself. "I can go back now, none will know why."

He did go back to the quaint, quiet town, so full of memories to him. As he passed the Kent mansion he saw, passing slowly across the lawn, a tall, womanly figure which he remembered—that well-poised, rather haughty head, that mass of dusky hair that crowned it, that clear-cut, resolute, delicate face. Why he had scarcely thought of her since last he met her; but yonder woman was Rupert Kent's sister, Alma.

How stately she was, how queenly, with the long folds of her plain black dress flowing down in statuesque fashion till they at last lay dark on the grasses! And she was all alone in the old place, too. What had rumour told him of her? That she was cold, proud; kind to the poor, but chill as a glacier always.

The sunlight touched her face. In its white-

ness and its calm it did look cold; but the long lashes might conceal warmth enough for a life's contenting for all that.

And with that thought in his heart he passed on and sent a line to Nora, asking if he might call on her.

"She would be so glad," the answer came; "would he call the following afternoon?"

He went up the path which once was so familiar to his feet. The past was with him in all its beauty as he neared the door.

How unchanged were all things save only him! The autumn flowers bloomed round about; the birds hung in their cages just where he and Nora hung them in those dear, dead days; and through the open window came—as so often to him in the past season of his love—the sweet voice of Nora Burt.

He caught his breath sharply, and paused to catch the unforgotten music.

"Of course, I put off mourning. You know the story, so I need not tell you that Mark comes to-day as a lover, and—"

"And Rupert's body has scarcely grown cold. No blade of grass has started on his grave; yet you, his almost wife, are ready to welcome a new lover!"

Whose was that clear yet shaken voice? Mark wondered. And why was it that his love for Nora seemed suddenly to pale and fade like a flower frost-blighted? Perhaps her low, scornful laugh chilled it to death as he caught its tinkle. Perhaps it had been dying for a year; hearts are so strange, one cannot tell.

"Not a new lover; a very old one," came in the silvery tones. "And I quite understand, my dear Alma. It is not regard for Rupert's memory so much as jealousy that makes you so disagreeable to me."

"Jealousy!"

"Rupert told me your secret long ago. You are very cold and proud, but you lost your heart to Mark Joyce the first time you saw his face. Yes, I know it was very foolish of you, but you did, and you need not deny it."

It was wrong to listen. Mark did not realize it then.

With a hot wave of colour stealing across his face, he listened for the denial.

It did not come. Instead the clear but tremulous voice gave him confirmation of it all.

"I do not deny it—it is no shame to love such a man as he. When he stood before my poor Rupert and me, knowing himself penniless where he should have had all—but for an old man's carelessness, would have had all—my heart went out to him. When he put forth his hand to my brother, and with not one single word of reproach or regret went out from his home to make a way for himself, my heart followed him. So brave, so noble, so generous, and yet you, whom he loved, forgot him in a year! I, to whom he never gave a thought, never will forget him; and I loathe the wealth I hold, because it should be his. You understand! No, you could not understand a true or unselfish affection. Good-bye, Nora!"

A light step at the door, and Mark's glowing eyes beheld the face of Alma, all its calm broken, all its pride melted, its beautiful humid eyes deep and warm, and thrilling with feeling.

He drew her hand through his arm and turned with her.

"I heard, Miss Kent," he said, softly, his voice vibrating; "and of all great gifts within the power of Heaven to grant me, this love of yours is best and first. I heard—may I believe! My life, my love, my happiness I place within this tender little hand."

And while blush after blush swept up and dyed her face, he lifted her hand and kissed it.

Somehow, the old love for Nora had its shroud and its grave, and there in his breast, to another stronger feeling lived.

Nora did not see him that day.

A NEAT little brush is attached to the tail of the glowworm, and it is used to keep clean that part of the insect from which the light gleams, so as to make it more distinctly visible.



## BROWN EYES AND BLUE.

## CHAPTER XV.

It was easy enough to do. Gable End, built ages back, had originally its rooms upstairs communicating, as often seen in very ancient houses; that is, in nearly every case, each room had a large square roomy cupboard several feet square, through which one could pass to the next room, and so on; these cupboards being, in fact, almost a small ante-room, as large were they—roomy and dark, where one hung unused garments, ward-ropes of the past, and odd lumber generally. These communicating doors were, of course, kept locked and bolted. Father's room was on Lella's side of the long corridor, and between the two chambers ran a broad, oblong curtained cupboard, in which was stowed away an old spinning-wheel, mother's easel she used to use, a few embroidery frames and other such odds-and-ends not now needed.

Here I intended to take up my standpoint; and concealed from any chance intruder into father's room, I could safely see myself and yet not be seen. The only thing was to get Lella to change rooms with me for the night, and that she could not refuse; besides, she could have no motive for desiring to do so.

I at once went off to find Lella, and ask her to go into my room for that night instead of her own. She agreed at once with alacrity, complimenting me upon what she termed my "splendid idea." I was obliged to tell her the reason in asking her to change, and begged her not to mention it even to aunt.

"Certainly not, as you don't wish it, Collie," she answered, earnestly. "I think you are going to do exactly the right thing; just what I should do were I in your place." It would be a great comfort to have it cleared up, wouldn't it?" she ended, plausively.

Then I went into her room to unlock and unbolt the door, which had been so seldom done that it creaked and groaned, and required some force to move the heavy bolts ere I got it opened. I next went along the few feet of dark space and tried the other door on father's side. This easily opened, for father used the cupboard to stow away cases in which bric-a-brac had arrived from abroad, and it was constantly opened and shut from his side by Prudence to give it a now-and-again dusting.

I opened the door to make sure it went smoothly, for I desired to make no noise at night, and just thrust my head round, saying:

"It's only I, father dear. I'm looking for something. Are you better?"

"I hope so, my child," he answered from the bed at the farther end of the room, but it did not sound very reassuringly in my watchful ears. Then I shut it gently and passed through again into Lella's room. So far everything was ready for the fulfilment of my plan.

I kept in my room until dinner time, at six o'clock. Collie had come back and gone with Michael round to the stables to see a new cart-horse which had been bought at Bury market a few days before. I heard him come in to dress, and go whistling softly to his room. I thought to myself, as I heard him, can one laugh, sing, be merry with an evil conscience? Is it possible to hide sin under a smile, clothe guilt with mirth? Perhaps—who can say?

I have never known Collie and Michael stay so long over their wine and smoke after dinner as they did that night. I thought they would never come back into the drawing-room, or was it my fancy that they remained longer than usual? I cannot tell, only I know I longed for them to come in. I wanted to feel Collie near me, to see his dear brown eyes looking into mine. I felt as if I were going to lose him, and must make the very most of him while still he stayed with me. It was a strange inexplicable fancy, that of mine, was it not?

He came and sat beside me on the sofa, where I sat trying to work.

"Busy, little Blue Eyes!" he said caressingly, laying his hand on my shoulder; "never idle,

always doing something. What are you making now?"

"A work-bag," I answered.

"Well, put down the work-bag, and tell me what you have been doing with yourself all the afternoon without me," he went on, smoothing my cheek.

I glanced over at aunt and Lella sitting talking in the far corner of the drawing-room. Did they hear him, I wondered?

"I was reading," I returned, bending over my work.

"Reading, or thinking of me! Come now, which was it, you dear little damsel!"

"Both," I said, quietly, and indeed I spoke but the truth.

"Do you know, Blue Eyes, I feel most awfully drowsy to-night," he begins, after a little time watching me putting my needle in and out attentively. "I feel as if I couldn't keep my eyes open, but that they would shut whether I wanted them or not. I can't think what should make me so sleepy. I never feel sleepy after dinner, as a rule, and I've done no hard work to-day to make me so. I'm morally certain in five minutes you'll find I'm nodding."

True enough, in less than five minutes after he spoke he was nodding, more than nodding, nearly quite asleep.

"Collie," I said, gently, "you're going to sleep. Wake up;" and I touched his arm.

He started, raised his head quickly, and stared at me for a second vacantly, as if he was trying to recall his scattered senses. I noticed how bright, and glassy his eyes looked—staringly bright, I thought.

"I beg your pardon, my Blue Eyes. What a lot I am. I wish I didn't feel so horribly sleepy. I shall be nodding again in a moment, I know."

Again he spoke truly. It was very curious, his dropping off to sleep like that. I never knew him do it before. He might have been keeping vigils for many nights past, and exhausted nature was thus taking her revenge for continued wakefulness now.

"Collie, wake up!" I said again at his ear.

He started just as before, and with a seeming effort rose to his feet.

"I'll go to bed, my darling," he answered, apologetically. "Bed is evidently the best place for a man in my condition. I can't make it out at all. I've done nothing out of the way to make me feel like this. It's Gable End air, I suppose."

"Good-night, dear love! pleasant dreams," he ended; then he kissed me, said good-night to aunt and Lella, who seemed to take his going as a matter of course, and went away. He looked almost as if he might fall asleep on his way upstairs, so heavy and drowsy did he appear to be.

Soon we one and all wended our different ways to bed, and the silence of a summer night reigned over earth and sky.

I wrapped myself in a cambric dressing gown, and waited in the gloomy little passage, against father's door, which I noiselessly set ajar, so that I could peep through, as I sat with a beating, throbbing heart, full of tumult, pain, miserable doubt, counting each hour as it ticked loudly from the old hall clock.

So the summer night passed along on its way, and nothing came to show me the truth. Father slept calmly on, and the dim light burning from a small Roman lamp still glimmered on the walls, casting deep shadows where it lit, while the rest of the long, low-ceilinged room remained dark, and densely shadowy. Still I waited there, waited for I hardly knew what—I dared not think what.

Then when the night waned, and I knew well enough that behind the curtained window the first faint dusky shadow of the coming dawn began to show itself to Mother Earth, the thing I dreaded came.

Before even a sound penetrated to my hearing I felt it was nearing me. A keen instinct of evil abroad made me alert on the instant, all my senses awake to discover this coming evil. From where I had placed myself I kept my burning eyes strained with their vigil, fixed on the door, in father's room, opening on the long corridor, for by that way this thing I had waited to see, which

I dreaded so intensely to see, though I watched for the very purpose, would come.

The door opened slowly, oh! so slowly, so gently, so noiselessly, as if for some wondrous care for the sleeper within. Someone moved in from the outer darkness into the deep shade of the long room, passed along still in shadow, until it reached the circle of dim light, and the little table where father's medicine stood—from a small phial in the hand poured something into the bottle, still without a sound, turned for one second to gaze at sleeping father near by, dreaming no murderous heart stayed to look on its victim; then it was for the first time I saw the shaded face! In another second or two it was gone. The room was empty once more.

Heaven's mercy on me, it was—Collie!

## CHAPTER XVI.

"Mine after life! What is mine after life?  
My day is closed. The gloom of night is come:  
A hopeless darkness settles o'er my fate!"

I THINK my heart must have ceased its beating for a moment. I uttered no cry, no sound, no sigh, not a single whisper. I tell you my heart stopped its beat, and I felt utterly powerless in mind, body, speech, and limb. My whole living, breathing being seemed dead within me, paralyzed by the sickening sense of the awful calamity which had befallen me, crushing me under its frightful weight.

It was but a short glimpse I had of that face, a fleeting impression of a second's space of time, but that dim, glimmering light had shown me my lover but too clearly. The heavy monotache, which hid, I often told him, the smile I loved so well; the brown velvet morning coat, against which I had so often—ah! so very often—rubbed my cheek, because it felt so soft and smooth; the short cropped head! No. Shadow could not hide him from me; the murderer, the midnight assassin was my own dear love, Collie! Ah me!

At last a sobbing, shuddering sigh came from my lips, a thrill crept through my deadened veins, sense and motion returned to me, and I moved heavily through the passage back into Lella's room. I need wait and watch no more now. My vigil was past and done.

Ifell on my knees by the bed, and buried my throbbing head in my hands, as if by doing so I could press away the pain and anguish it contained. Oh! that I had but been blind, deaf, dumb; and yet it was better as it was, my sounder judgment added to my first blind cry. To have married the murderer of my own father, though unknowingly, perchance to find it out by some untoward accident, or confession on my husband's part, after we had been tied for years in one silken, golden bond. How terrible that would be! No, far better to know now, before it is too late, before I have lost my beloved father for ever.

Shall I ever sleep again? Laugh, sing, or rejoice? Will life ever be to me in the future what it has been until to-night? I thought hopelessly, and my dreary heart echoed like a knell—never, never. Love, hope, happiness are all dead, passed away like shadows at noonday; life will henceforth only be sorrowful memories, a vanished bliss, a bitter regret.

"Oh, my love, my dear love, that it should have been you!" I moaned to myself, again and again, as the gray dawn came stealing up from behind the dark hills to give earth sweet greeting, and gladden the souls of men. To me coming day meant sorrow, despair, agony, and farewell to love. I knew there could but be one ending, one finish to our brief love-dream, and that was an eternal farewell. I said the word over many times in hopeless endeavour to realize the depth, the immensity of its meaning—so hard to utter, but it must be said for all that—said at once, without any delay. I would tell no one of my awful discovery, but Collie must leave Gable End immediately—not an hour's delay if it could be helped. There should be no time allowed him to finish his sin. He and I must part irrevocably, part for ever so

long as we two lived and had our being—parted hands, hearts, and lives for evermore. There was no other way.

When morning dawned I had made up my mind fully as to what I should say to Collin, how I would bid him good-bye. It required all my strength of nerve calmly to face the inevitable and conquer despair, yet it should be conquered. I vowed it on my knees as the first roseate sunlight came afloat the mullioned window to tell me day had come.

Soon came a low knock at the door. I rose from my knees and went to unlock it, trying to steady my trembling limbs and still my beating brain. It was Lella. I had asked her to come back to her room as soon as she awoke, that none of the servants—Prue, or, indeed, anyone—might know of my having watched through the long night. So I knew it could only be her.

She pushed open the door, and came in softly. Then she stopped and looked hard at me with a kind of frightened gasp.

"Oh, Collin! how awful you look!" she began, under her breath. "What is the matter! What has happened! Did you see anything! At least I need not ask; you couldn't look like that unless you had. Do tell me who it was. I swear not to mention it unless you wish, or until you say I may."

"No," I answered, slowly. "I shall not tell you or anybody what I have seen, that is supposing I had seen anything. It is useless to ask me questions, because I shall not answer them."

"At least you are satisfied that I am not the poisoner!" she said, emphasising the last word almost vindictively.

"Yes, I am satisfied as far as that, completely."

"Would you like to have this room again to-night?" she questioned, going to the window, through which the morning sun now began to stream brilliantly.

"No, I shall not want it again."

"Well, I'm glad you've found out, at any rate," she went on, calmly.

"Found out what?" I queried, turning sharply on her. There was so little sympathy in her manner that it galled me, heart-recked as I already was. "I did not say I had found out anything. What do you mean?"

"Good gracious, (Collin) don't try and hood-wink me, because it's no use," she returned, pettishly. "I don't want to pry into your secrets if you can't tell them voluntarily, but anyone can see with half an eye that you have found out something unpleasant. You wouldn't have such a face as you have unless you had. Why, you look as if you had been dead and come to life again," she ended, fixing her eyes on me.

"So I have," I said, said, recklessly, the anguish flooding my heart once more, and making me careless of my words. "Dead and come to life again, but what a life! I wish I were dead a thousand times over rather."

"Every dog has his day," she put in, significantly. "You have had yours according to your own saying; now I am, on the contrary, looking forward to mine," and as she said it I almost fancied a cruel little curve came on her lips, a curve of derision, of mocking satisfaction.

I did not answer her, but passed out of the room to my own, where I bolted myself in, secure even from old Prue, who, when she came later on, I bade bring me some tea; that I had a bad headache, and did not intend to come down to breakfast. She brought me the tea, and a glorious Devonshire rose, which Collin had plucked fresh from the garden and sent up to me with his love, to his "poor, suffering little Blue Eyes," which Prue faithfully repeated word for word.

How little he guessed the depth, height, breadth of my suffering. How sweet the rose was, the very last gift he would ever make me. Erring, ah! Collin. So plain it all was now—so feasible that he should be the would-be murderer. Father dead, the money would be mine, to do with just as I pleased. Being mine, Collin would naturally expect me to lend or give him what would save Daryl from the felon's dock, and the house of Boughton from dishonour. At least I had the satisfaction of knowing it was not for

himself that he had set about so ghastly a deed; but the blood-guiltiness remained in all its miserable horror for all that.

Lella said "every dog has his day." I tell you mine was only half a day, very full of bliss while it lasted, but only half a day, that is all; the rest is lost to me, snatched out of my longing grasp, a dead memory.

At last I was ready—ready to go down and bid my lover farewell. Through the mullioned panes I saw him pacing to and fro the old close-cut yew walk, smoking his after breakfast cigarette; every now and then he stayed his steps and glanced up at my window. He did not see me, for I kept well out of sight. I stood by the dimly curtain and watched him, knowing well enough that never more should I see him pace to and fro that path.

How big, and strong, and handsome he looked, and how black his heart under that fair presence! He was guilty, yet I loved him, though shame to me in confessing it. But how can one kill love all in a moment! I could not then, it was yet so early; but I meant it should be done. There was the thick moustache, the brown velvet coat, just as I had seen it only a few hours before, and the sight had frozen my being, and given me in its stead despair.

Poor Collin! and oh! poor, poor Collin!

I turned away from the window, unable to look at my dear lost love any longer. It unnerved me for the task I had set myself, made me unable to rightly distinguish 'twixt right and wrong, duty and love. Then I rang for Prudence. When she came I said to her quietly,—

"Prue, my head is still aching, and I think a little fresh air might do it good. I shall go into the orchard and lie in my hammock, but I don't want any of them to know I am up and out, because I want to be quiet, except, of course, Mr. Boughton," carefully fastening the rose in my waist-belt, "and so I wish you in ten minutes' time from now to go to him quietly, and tell him I am in the orchard, and would like to have him there! Do you understand, Prue?" I ended, looking at her.

Of course Prue said she did, and would do exactly as I desired. I think, after myself and father, Collin came first in her estimation, and nothing pleased her so much as a little chat now and again with him.

"Master will soon cure the headache, dearie," she said, nodding her head—she always called Collin "Master," perhaps by anticipation, whereas Michael was always "Mister Michael"—"there's naught like a sweetheart to send the ache away. Bless him! he's a right dear young gentleman, that he is," she ended, as I passed away by the black staircase unheeded, unheeded through the dairy, and so to the orchard, with ten long minutes of wrestling with Fate before me, and then a dreary vista of blank despair.

This is my story. Judge if I do not need all your pity. Here am I waiting this lovely summer morning—rich, ripe, fragrant with all July's fullness of blossom—to bid my love an eternal good-bye, to send him from me for ever—for ever, remember. To see him pass away, never to come again. The emptiness of life for me then. The cruel coldness of separation. The endless round of absence. Oh! I'll not think of it, for "that way madness lies."

I lean against the apple tree, waiting. Is it ten minutes yet! Surely not. Stay a little, Time, I entreat—implore—beseech you. Give me a little longer space to count my lover still mine. Stop your beat, and gather in no more minutes just for once. Inexorable Time, for ever on the march. What an age it seems, this ten minutes. Perhaps he is not coming, guesses why I want him, and has already gone—left Gable End. Oh! not that, I must see him once—only once more, if even to say good-bye—just to hear his voice—see his face once again. How foolish of me, he cannot know why I want him here; of course he will come. Yes, there goes the latch—the orchard gate—he is coming.

"My poor little darling Blue Eyes! she has a headache! Let me put your head here and kiss the aching head away," and ere I know he is by my side, I feel his arms round me, drawing my

head against his breast, and his lips are on my cheek.

I do not draw myself away, why should I! It is the last time I shall ever feel those lips on mine, and so I let him have his way.

"I'd no idea you were up, until Prudence came to me, and, with many 'nods and becks and wretched smiles,' as some poet has it, told me you were in the orchard."

"I told her to tell you, for I wished to—to speak to you, Collin," I begin, low-voiced.

"So you shall, you darling, as much as ever you like. What do you want me to do!—gather the dessert, or help Peter dig some young potatoes?" he says, jocularly, evidently far from noticing how seriously I am trying to speak.

Can this man be a murderer at heart! Can he be! Did I not myself see him in the very act! How, then, can I for one moment doubt! I wait a moment before answering, for the act of separation is already beginning its journey with the words I am going to utter. Then I lift my sorrowful face from its resting-place against his heart, straight to his. Those clear, brown, honest-looking eyes give me back glance for glance most tenderly.

"Collin," I say, with a sob in my voice; "you must leave Gable End."

He stares at me as he replies,—

"Leave Gable End, my dearest child, what ever for?"

No doubt he imagines I have got some crazy fancy in my mind which I shall presently explain.

"You must," I repeat, earnestly, with trembling tones; "you must go away, and—never come back any more. We must—part."

Then, for the first time, his face loses its bright look, and becomes troubled.

"Part, Collin! Do you know what you are saying! Do you really mean what you say!" he urges, gravely, regarding me still with eyes of anxious love.

"Yes; I mean it, Collin," I answer, drearily.

"Do you mean that you are going to send me away—that you wish to break off your engagement!" incredulously.

"Yes," I murmur, under my breath.

"And your reason!" he says, hoarsely.

"I cannot give you the reason," I answer, falteringly, after a moment's silence.

"You cannot, Collin! For Heaven's sake, tell me what all this means! I will not believe you can really mean what you say now. You are doing it to try me, are you not! My darling, say you are," and he strains me tightly in his arms.

"Collin, it is the truth. I sent for you here just now because I wanted to tell you this, and bid you good-bye."

He looses his arms from round me, and I lift my head from his breast. It is the first broken strand of our twisted silken love chain. It will presently be quite severed.

"I will not believe it unless you give me the reason," he goes on, hoarsely; "you cannot be so cruelly heartless to send me adrift, and not let me hear how, when, or where I have offended you. It is not like my little, tender Collin," he ends, his voice full of pain.

Shall I tell him the why and wherefore—give him the reason he craves to know! If I did, what would be the use! Of course he would deny it strenuously. I had only my own eyesight to prove my accusation; he would probably have a hundred denials ready on his lips to force his innocence—and I to try and brand my lover with the name of poisoner! The thought was horrible. No; my lips should be sealed on what I saw, and perhaps Collin's own conscience would whisper the reason I dared not—could not tell him now.

"I am not offended with you," I return, at last, thinking that my heart was broken, but I would not tell him that.

"Then it is because of Daryl," he says, quickly; "if you are not offended with me for anything I myself have done, it must be because of Daryl. Is it not?"

In one sense he is right. From his brother's first wrong-doing came the necessitous thought



for his own sin. Here, if I choose, is my loophole of escape, since I will not confess the bitter truth.

"Yes," I murmur, drooping my head.

"I thought it would come," he says, at last, painfully; "I was afraid it would be like that. You have thought it over, and decided that, under the existing circumstances, you would rather not marry a Boughton. They say second thoughts are always best, yours may follow the rule; but do you not own it is rather cruel to throw me over, after all your promises to be my true and faithful love through misfortune and sorrow!" he asks, reproachfully.

"You have just cause to reproach me, Colin," I answer, sadly, with a heavy, long-drawn sigh.

"Think again, my dearest. Think once more before you say good-bye to me. In all the wide world no man will ever love you more devotedly than I do. Is a brother's fault to part us like that?" he takes my palm between his.

I feel, at touch of those hands, a yearning desire to take him back to my heart, for I cannot help loving him. I think of all the lonely, desolate coming years in front of me, and I am still so young to lose hope, happiness—all that makes life sweet. If only he were not guilty! If I but knew him innocent! If, Oh! terrible word of doubt; that "If" came like a keen sharp knife to cut our love in twain. He was guilty. It could not be.

"No, no, Colin," I exclaim, hurriedly, drawing my hand away from that soft clasp, which makes me almost forget his sin; "It is no use, I have thought. I am not speaking from any sudden freak or fancy. I do not want to be cruel or heartless, as you call it, but we must part."

"Very well," he answers, brokenly; "since you are determined to throw me over for no fault of my own I cannot help it. Of course it is impossible to force you to keep your word. I fancied you really loved me. I find I was egregiously mistaken. Perhaps, some day, you may be sorry for what you are doing now."

"But I am sorry now," I interrupt, eagerly, for I cannot bear him to imagine me hopelessly fickle and inconsistent, and I must defend myself as much as lies in my power; "you do not know how sorry, Colin, believe me," I end, most earnestly.

"It sounds incomprehensible, Collie. I should like to believe in your sorrow, but your deeds belie your words," he remarks, gazing mournfully at me. "Besides, you might have allowed me a little longer happiness. You need not have thrown me over so soon; it would have been time enough when the world cried aloud our family dishonour. Let me think you mine a little longer; then, when the full bitterness of disgrace falls on us, you will have ample excuse to send me away. If it must be then, I will go without a reproach. At least, give me space to try and realise the idea of losing you. My darling, say yes," he pleads, with tender force.

"It is impossible," I answer, with a spasm of anguish gnawing at my breast; "you must not stay at Gable End any longer—not a day. You must go at once, this very morning, and you must never—never come back any more," I pant out.

It is clearly no use beating about the bush with him. I shall have to make my meaning perfectly intelligible ere he understands that he and I meet no more after this glorious summer morn.

"Collie, there is something behind this which you have not told me. Something has urged you to this step of which I have no knowledge. You are concealing the true cause or part of it. I shall require to know what this something is. If you will not tell me I must ask some explanation from your father or Mrs. Lascelles," he says gravely, after a moment's silence.

This is of all things the one I dread most. It is not necessary because I know him guilty that all the rest should. I can fancy aunt's purring sneer, Lella's mocking laugh, Michael's silent disdain, father's grief mingled with mine—anything but that. It would be too bitter a draught to swallow. And I, who have been so proud of

my lover, rejoiced so openly that he was mine. I could not bear it.

"No, Collie; you must not do that," I cry in an agony, "It is all my own doing, of my own free will. They have no idea even of what I am doing; you must not go to them. If you will know, there is another reason than because of Daryl; but, indeed, do not ask it of me!"

"But I do ask it of you," he returned, almost sternly. "I have a right to hear this other reason you speak of. It is matter of life and death to me, as it were, and you expect me to take for granted that you are just in breaking off your engagement to me without one single word of warning beforehand. I do ask you, and I expect an answer."

I look fearfully at him. Has he really no idea of the true cause? Does no haunting conscience-pang reply to his demand to know? Or is it all a wondrous piece of acting, the subtle finesse of a clever art? I am torn in two with divided thoughts.

"Come, Collie," he goes on as I wait, not knowing what to do; "you have not denied that I am right. Tell me this reason. I will know, whatever it may cost me. No one can fight in the dark. Let me know my enemy; be it man, woman, or child, friend or foe, fancy or truth, then I shall know what to do, how to combat it. Tell me, my dear."

"Oh! it is horrible, horrible; I cannot tell you," I murmur, helplessly wringing my hands together. Then I suddenly look up into his face. "Collie, if I do tell you, will you swear to go away at once without asking any more questions of a soul in Gable End? Unless you do that I must remain silent."

"If it is necessary for your peace of mind that I should swear as you ask, I will certainly do so," he says, rather coldly.

I know in his eyes I must look a pitiful, cringing, feeble girl, not worth a second thought. Well he must think what he pleases, it can make no difference to our parting. The shadow is very nearly over us now—such a chill, drear, empty, soulless shadow.

"Listen, then," I pant out feverishly, keeping my two hands clenched together as I speak. "I heard by accident yesterday morning that—some one had put—poison—into father's—medicine." I stop to get my breath, which seems leaving me. My eyes fixed on Collie, I see his face change, the eyes stare back at me, and the colour dies out in pallor. This to me means guilt, but guilt found out when it thought itself hidden. "I knew it must be done in the night," I go on more evenly, the hardness of despair creeping over me; "so I made up my mind to watch unseen through the night. I changed rooms, and waited to see who desired to murder my own dearest father, who had not one single enemy in all the wide world. I did not wait in vain." I pause, choking down a sob which rends me. "I saw the would-be poisoner, saw the poison poured into the medicine—the man who did it was—COLIN BOUGHTON!"

There is not a sound, not a whisper through the apple boughs, not a shiver in the long grass. The very air seemed to hold its breath in dreadful suspense. I had sunk my head when I uttered that name, and I dare not look up at Collie's face, dreading to see the anguish of confirmation written on the features I love. It seems an eternity of waiting until he speaks, though but a few passing seconds only.

"It" he says at last hollowly, and I look up quickly at him as his voice pierces the summer stillness. His face is perfectly blanched. Is it with fear at having been discovered? Doubtless. "I, the poisoner of your father? You must be mad, Collie! Mad to say it. Suffering under some frightful hallucination of mind and brain to credit me with so foul a deed," he goes on, passionately indignant. "I, to try and poison your father, whom I respect and honour more than I can express, and you to believe it of me! It is not possible; it's beyond all credence."

"But I saw you," I murmur, drooping my head once more. "I could not be mistaken, for I saw you do it with my own eyes. You know in your heart of hearts I am right."

"As there is a Heaven above us I deny it, Collie," he exclaims, fiercely. "I deny the existence of such a frightful treachery in my mind. I deny that you could have seen me. You are suffering under some horrible delusion."

"Do not perjure yourself by calling Heaven to witness your denial, Collie, because it's useless. I know you are guilty; I myself witnessed your guilt; do not try and make me think you worse than you are," I put in hopelessly, for I feel I am pronouncing my own death-warrant.

"Then you choose to believe I did this assassin's work! You believe it is my hand that was traitor enough to pour the poison into your father's medicine! Answer me. Is this so?"—commandingly. How like innocence he speaks. How easily could I be deceived had I not seen for myself.

"Yes," I answer in a sighing whisper, "for I saw you."

Again there is silence; a stillness of expectancy in the listening summer air. A scarlet winged moth comes fluttering near, and settles on the low-hanging apple bough before me. I watch it aimlessly, as one watches a dancing shadow, while I stand waiting to hear Collie speak.

"Good-bye!" he says at length, with an effort and catch in his voice. Such an altered voice it is now, all the pleasant ring fled from it, the mirthful chime gone. "Good-bye, Collie Lascelles, I am going," and he turns away as he finishes.

Going! Leaving me like that, without one single word of kind farewell to help me through the lonely coming years without him—to part in hatred, anger, misery! I had not meant our parting to be like that, guilty though he be. To feel I shall never see him again, and let him go with a cold, curt "good-bye," uttered as a mere matter of form. No. If a thousand fiends held my tongue I must speak.

I spring forward and hold his arm.

"Do not be angry with me, Collie. Let us at least part in peace. I forgive you, indeed I do—be sure of that. I know why you did it, and I forgive you," I repeat beseechingly.

"Stay!" he answers, coldly. "It is for me to forgive you for asserting a monstrous, baseless calumny. I swear to Heaven above I am innocent. You say I am guilty, that you saw me commit a deed detestable to utter. There is nothing left for me to say but 'good-bye'; to do but go. It is only what you wished yourself, hence you cannot complain." And he removes my hand gently, but firmly, from his arm. All the tender, caressing Collie has gone from voice and manner. We might be the merest acquaintances glibly repeating the conventional "good-bye" of ordinary everyday life, not lovers parting for ever. It may be little to him, but to me it is akin to a death agony, this struggle to win the battle 'twixt duty and love. I am warring against self, and the contest is wearing me out.

I bury my face in my hands, so that I may not see him go.

"Good-bye!" he says once more, and the voice softens a very little; only my strained hearing could detect the quaver in the tones I have loved so well, but I hear it. Then the grasses rustle, as of some footfall treading them down—he has gone. Gone without even a handshake, without even one single loving word.

The silken cord which bound our hearts has snapped in twain. The black shadow looming over our heads has dropped between Collie and I. Fate has floated us away from each other, and set us drifting in opposite directions down the river of Life.

The sound of the closing orchard gate echoes through the still soft air. Then I drop my hands from my face, and look up into Heaven's azure sky. All else seems mocking me. Earth, nature, the trees, the birds all seem to join in one heart-rending jeer. "He is gone," they all cry in whispering chorus. Only Heaven's deep dark blue looks calm, clear, peaceful, and full of pity.

My brain is throbbing, my veins filled with



"AS THERE IS A HEAVEN ABOVE US, I DENY IT, CELIA!" COLIN EXCLAIMS, FIRMLY.

molten fire, while a heavy, dull lethargy seems slowly creeping over my whole sentient being. I fling myself down in the long grass under the shade of the apple boughs, and wish that Mother Earth would open her arms and swallow me up, or that anything would happen to deaden this fearful regret which eats into my poor heart.

"Oh, my love! my dear lost love!" is all my longing, yearning cry.

I do not know how long I lie in the deep grass. Time for me has no count, no motive power. It might be days, weeks, years, for aught I care. I cannot weep; tears are denied me, and my despair too overpowering to escape in the floodgates of tearful sorrow. I only feel that I am desolate and my lover gone.

"Celia! you must come in, there is going to be a thunderstorm. I have been searching for you everywhere; the rain will be very heavy when it comes down, and you will get wet."

It is Michael who speaks, bending over me. Then for the first time I notice that the heavens, lately so serenely, calmly blue, have become overcast with great lowering, black thunder-clouds. The little wind, sure presage of a storm, sweeps through the apple boughs, and rustles the leaves in sombre anticipation, sighing through the air as if to warn the earth that a tempest brooded near. But I, miserable as I am, cared not whether there be storm or calm, tempest or sunshine.

"Leave me alone. I want to be left alone," I say, not raising my head, and I vaguely wonder if by this time they all know that Colin has gone.

"Come, Celia dear, you must come in. You will get so wet. The rain is beginning to fall now."

"Let it. I wish to die; I don't care to live. I'm a wretched, miserable girl; do leave me alone," I go on wearily.

Snooping over me he tries to raise me from my bed of long, fresh grass. I look up at him with my haggard face. "Did you not hear what I said, Michael! Go, leave me alone."

"You are ill, Celia. You don't know what

you are saying," he returns in his harsh voice, but he speaks compassionately.

"Ill!" I repeat, getting up and leaning against the tree; "yes! Michael, you are right; I am ill, very, very sick at heart. Do you know that Colin has gone?—that I have sent him away, broken off my engagement, told him to go!"

"I know he has left Gable End," he answers ambiguously, and I fancy the harsh voice takes a tone harder as he says it. "He gave no reason, merely mentioned you had broken with him. We concluded you had good cause, and asked no questions. He has been gone the last two hours"—and looks away from me. I know well enough what they all think and suspect. That is why they asked no questions of him. So long as they do not talk of it it matters not to me now.

"I am glad," I say, hardly; "it is what I wished," but in my heart I know it is a lie that I am glad, or wish him gone. "I never desire to hear his name again. Never talk about him, never recall him in any way; it is the only thing I ask," and I glance defiantly at Michael. He stands gazing at the ground beneath, but he says nothing in return.

The rain begins to patter in heavy drops on the leaves above us. One long, low rumbling of thunder sounds away in the black heavens.

"Come, let us go," he says, putting out his hand, and I move a little forward. With the first few steps I put my hand up quickly to my head—how it throb and shoots, whirling round!

"I am dizzy, Michael, so dizzy, everything seems reeling with me. Give me your arm," I call out in a vague, wandering manner, and I stretch out one hand for his support. He gives it me, and we again move forward, but my steps are heavy. Perhaps I am ill. I never felt like this before—never.

As we pass out of the orchard and into the garden I stop suddenly.

"Listen, Michael, listen!" I say feverishly, holding up my finger in mid-air to enforce attention; "what are those bells ringing for?"

"Bells!" he echoes wonderingly; "there are no bells ringing, Celia!"

"Oh, yes, there are, indeed. I hear them quite plainly. You must be deaf, for they are ringing loudly. Anyone could hear them. How merrily they chime, like wedding bells, full of love and happiness! Sweet bells! will you ring like that when I and Colin are going—stay, what am I talking about! I shall have no wedding bells rung for me. Colin has gone; but they are ringing now for someone," I end brokenly, grasping his arm.

Michael looks scared at me, white through the sun tan.

"There are no bells," he answers quietly, holding one of my hands tightly in his; "it is your fancy, Celia, dear. Come indoors, out of the rain. You are ill. Come"—and he attempts to draw me gently towards the door, as I stand listlessly in the attitude of listening on the broad gravel path by the old yew walk.

"There they go," I cry gaily, resisting him; "listen, Michael; one after another all ringing how good a thing it is to live and be loved. Chime away, you joyful things, ring your hearts out with mirth and joy. 'Tis time enough to mourn when love lies bleeding, cold in death. Dead, did I say! yes; love is dead! It is getting cold even now. Are you there, Michael? Take me in. I feel heavy and ill. I have lost love, thrown it away. Oh! my poor heart—my poor heart!"

(To be continued.)

THIS STORY COMMENCED IN NO. 1365. BACK READERS CAN STILL BE HAD.

THE strongest sentiment of the Turk is his reverence for his mother. He always stands in her presence until invited to sit down, a compliment he pays to no one else.

THERE is a quicksilver mine in Peru 170 fathoms in circumference and 480 feet deep. In this profound abyss are streets, squares, and a chapel where religious worship is held.





"TWO GOOD-BYES IN ONE DAY," SHE SAID, TRYING TO SMILE, "IS TOO MUCH FOR ONE PERSON."

## YOUNG AND SO FAIR.

### CHAPTER XIII.

"THEY ARE LUSHINGTON'S!"

HUGH MACDONALD sprang out of the carriage with an exclamation of delight as they arrived at the Chestnuts, and found Dudley Wentworth standing on the steps.

"This is jolly!"

"I found it was not necessary to join till to-morrow," said Dudley, leaning forward to speak to his father, "so I sent down my things under Minton's charge, and came here to see you settled. I hope you are not tired with your journey!" turning to Sibbel, with whom he had forgotten to shake hands.

"Not at all—that is, only a little," she said, incoherently, as he helped her out of the carriage.

Her hand rested in his for half a minute, but he did not press it or try to retain it, and his manner, though very courteous, was equally distant.

He led his father through the hall, panelled with dark oak, and with pillars of the same, on which the light of the wood fire glistened cheerfully, to the library, where his favourite chair, imported from the Chase, was ready to receive him.

"It all looks very comfortable," said Lord Wentworth, looking round the cheerful room in which Dudley had taken care to place many of the familiar objects from the Chase, such as the large brass inkstand which had been given to him years ago by his own tenants, the family Bible with the jewelled clasps, and the dates of bygone generations of Wentworths on its flyleaf, the picture of his dead wife, which looked down on him from over the mantelpiece, most of his favourite authors, and one or two landscapes which he especially prized. "Miss Fitzgerald shall give us a cup of tea, and then we shall feel quite at home."

Sibbel seated herself in front of the Sutherland tea-table, drawing off her gloves, whilst Hugh busied himself with the sugar-tongs. Already she felt that if it had not been for her one fatal mistake, she could have been very happy in this quiet home.

There was not the splendour of Wentworth Chase, but unostentatious comfort in its place, and to her unsophisticated mind it seemed pleasanter to be waited on by one irreproachable looking servant such as Manser, the grave butler, than by a crowd of footmen in gorgeous liveries.

Hugh, after taking Lord Wentworth's tea, sat down on a low chair by Sibbel's side, lounging in his graceful foreign fashion almost at her feet. His face was peculiarly handsome, lighted up by a pair of passionate dark eyes, which he had inherited from his Spanish mother. They were sure to get him into mischief some day, for, like an inflammable fuse, wherever they rested they were apt to set light. His hair was jet black, his complexion dark but clear, his brows nearly met in a level line above his straight nose, and although he was only nineteen or twenty, his tenderly curved upper lip was already shaded by a moustache.

"You go back to Christchurch to-morrow, Hugh!" said Dudley.

"Yes. I wish I could stay longer; but I've got to grind before Easter."

"If you don't start till the afternoon you will be able to show Miss Fitzgerald about the place. It will be better than finding out the best ride for herself after you've gone."

"Yes; but are there any horses?" he asked, quickly.

"A few; we are not quite beggars. May Queen for Miss Fitzgerald—I thought you might be ambitious of something bigger than your pony," casting a glance towards the tea-table—"and Acorn for you. You must keep him up to the mark while I am away. As to carriages, we have nothing but the brougham and the dog-cart. I wanted to keep the pony-carriage, but I didn't know what to put into it. I am afraid you

will want it terribly in the summer," turning towards Sibbel.

She raised her head.

"I shall be so delighted with May Queen that I shall never want to drive; and if I did, perhaps Hugh would take me in the dog-cart."

"If I only get the chance!" his eloquent eyes flashing with pleasure.

"If you don't mind the trouble, perhaps you would let me show you the house. I want to know if I have done right about your rooms."

Sibbel rose with a fluttering heart, and followed him "upstairs and downstairs, and in my lady's chamber," scarcely daring to speak, except when directly appealed to, and yet noting wherever she went some sign of his care and kindly consideration for others.

Her bedroom, which was hung with pale blue, opened into a pleasant little sitting-room decorated with the same colour. A fire was burning in the grate, books were lying on the table just as if the room had been lately inhabited, and in the centre stood a vase of her favourite flowers, the fragile snowdrops.

She bent over them admiringly.

"Just as if Mrs. Upperton knew how fond I was of them."

"I thought they might help to make you feel less desolate," he said quietly. "After a cheerful home like the Lodge I am afraid you will feel this very lonely."

"I hated my life at the Lodge," looking down at a book, whilst the colour rose in her cheeks; "but I feel as if I should love it here!"

"I hope you won't be disappointed. You won't be quite deserted," he added, after a pause; "for with my father's permission, I gave Lushington carte blanche to come whenever he liked."

"Oh, why?" in startled dismay.

He looked at her in grave surprise.

"Because you were kind enough to take pity on my father, we did not mean you to be shut up like a nun."

"But I would much rather," with suppressed

eagerness. "I don't want visitors—I shall be quite happy with Lord Wentworth."

"For how long? Till the end of the week, when the novelty will be worn out!" answering himself with some bitterness.

"Till the end of the year, and the year after that. Mr. Wentworth, I really mean it; but you don't believe me," looking up at him with her wistful eyes.

He looked away from her, and stooped to pick up a glove which she had dropped.

"How can I?" he said, slowly. "It's against nature. If you like a man well enough to marry him you must want to see him more than once a year."

"You might marry him, because"—scarcely daring to whisper it above her breath—"because it was best."

"Yes," looking at her sternly in the face; "but it is never 'best,' only a question of barter and sale if the heart is not in it. I should be sorry to think that one of my oldest friends was a victim to such an arrangement."

She sank down into the depths of a comfortable-looking armchair, for fear lest he should see how she was shaking.

"This is probably the last opportunity I shall have of speaking to you in private," he said, after a pause; "as I shall leave the house before you are up to-morrow."

"At what time?" she said, eagerly.

"About half-past seven."

"I shall be down," in a low voice.

"I wouldn't if I were you; you will find the days long enough without getting up to stretch them. However, all I wanted to say is that Mrs. Upperton will take all the trouble of the house off your hands; as to other things you will give your orders, and the servants will look upon you as their mistress. If you want company you can sit with my father, who will always be glad to have you, and when you wish to be alone you can come up here. Do you like any other rooms better? I only chose these for you according to my own fancy, and they may not suit yours. They face the south, so you will have plenty of sun."

"I wouldn't change them for the world—I think they are charming."

"That is well. Of course, if you wish to invite a friend now and then to stay with you, you can; and mind you accept any invitations from the people in the neighbourhood, or else you will be feeling dull and want to go back."

"No, as long as Lord Wentworth will keep me, I shall stay."

"You have not tried it yet," with a grave smile.

"I thought you had gone without saying good-bye to me," she said suddenly, with a desperate craving to break the barrier of ice between them.

At first he did not answer, and her heart faltered, but after what seemed to her a wearisome interval, he said very gravely, "I did that long ago."

"But I saw you again!"

"Yes, I know."

Then he went slowly to the door.

"Twice I met you, once at the stable, and again when you were running away—you may think it strange, but I want to forget them both."

There was a sound of a closing door, and she knew that he was gone. In bitter disappointment she sprang to her feet.

"Oh, why have I come!" she cried to the inanimate things around her. "Why have I come if it is to bring me nothing but pain!"

And yet when the night came, and she laid her head upon the pillow, she blessed Heaven for having given her the chance of a home with Dudley's father.

At half-past six the next morning she was up and dressed, fearful lest the time should slip away without her knowing it. Feeling half-ashamed of being up, she stole softly downstairs, meeting no one on the way.

The breakfast-room was empty, but preparations for a solitary breakfast were already apparent at the upper end of the snow-white cloth. She sat down by the fire, with a strong

inclination to run upstairs and put herself to bed again.

Manservant's eye she was afraid of meeting, and how could she ever find courage to bear the surprised look in his master's? It was too early for the newspapers, and she had nothing to occupy herself with.

Presently she could bear her idleness no longer, and went into the library to find a book. A housemaid was busy sweeping, and nearly jumped out of her skin, as Sibbel's small figure appeared through a cloud of dust. Catching up the first book she came across, which happened to be Nuttall's Dictionary, she beat a hasty retreat to her armchair. There she sat for some time unmolested, except for the bringing in of various items of the soldier's breakfast by the noiseless Manservant.

At last there were sounds of wheels on the gravel, and the dog-cart, driven by a smart-looking groom, drove up to the porch—the hands of the ebony clock on the mantelpiece pointed to half-past seven, and at the same moment the door was hastily thrown open, and Wentworth walked into the room, with an unlighted cigar in his mouth, and a fur-lined coat over his arm.

"Not much time—just give me a mouthful of grill, and a cup of coffee—mustn't lose the train on any account. Sibbel!"

He threw the cigar down on the table, the coat on a chair, and stared, while Manservant, thinking breakfast much more important than anything else, poured out the coffee and put a grilled bone on his master's plate. Sibbel stood up, and then came shyly forward, with her book in her hand.

"I had no idea you were such a bookworm. Did you get up on purpose to read it?" taking it from her hand. "By Jove, a dictionary!"

"Eat your breakfast—you said there was no time!" her heart beating fast, her cheek crimsoning under his puzzled eyes.

He took her advice, swallowed a few mouthfuls, drank his coffee off at a draught, and then, after wiping his mouth carefully, threw down his napkin, and stood up for Manservant to help him into his coat. His face was grave and very thoughtful, as Sibbel watched him surreptitiously from out of the corner of her eye. "Just fetch me a Bradshaw"—to Manservant—"on the writing-table in the library, and put it in the cart." The butler departed, and for one precious minute they were left alone.

"Good-bye," he said gently, holding out his hand.

She put hers into it, but her tongue seemed tied.

"Take care of the old man for me," his lip trembling under his fair mustaches, for he knew that the parting which he had just been through upstairs might be for years, and might be for ever. "Good-bye, and Heaven bless you," her hand clasped tight in both of his—his dark eyes fixed intently on her quivering face.

Her left hand fumbled nervously with the snowdrops in the front of her dress. "Will you—take them?" she gasped.

"Yes, dear, that I will." Then a shadow came across the brightness of his face, his mouth grew stern, and his eyes proud. "I forgot—they are Lushington's," and one by one, they fell from his fingers down upon the carpet. "I could have loved you, child," he said, sternly; "but I will share you with no man!" Then he turned on his heel and was gone.

Hugh came rushing down the stairs, and clambered into the dog-cart as Dudley was in the act of driving off.

"If you try that dodge too often you'll break your neck some day."

"I'd risk it for the sake of coming with you," a swift glance of the Spanish eyes expressing their owner's devotion.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### "TWO GOOD BYES!"

AND this was all that poor Sibbel got, through trying to outdo the early worm—a final farewell, which might ring in her ears till the last day of doom, and yet never ring without bringing a fresh sting! For the rest of the day she felt as limp

and dejected as her rejected flowers, which were left on the floor, and trodden under foot of man.

Hugh came back from the station in time to breakfast with her, and dominated by the butler's eye she forced herself to eat and drink, lest her want of appetite should be ascribed to the right cause. As it was Macdonald's last day he insisted upon taking her out for a ride, according to Wentworth's suggestion. The March wind was sharp and chill; but there was some pleasure in braving it and climbing the pleasant Berkshire hills, which next month would be clothed in a mantle of green foliage. They made a striking pair, as they rode side by side on their thoroughbreds, each riding with ease and grace, as if long accustomed to the saddle, each in the prime of youth and health, with a beautiful face on which sorrow had stamped its seal.

"I shall always call you Sibbel now," said Hugh, putting one hand on his saddle, and leaning forward so as to give his companion the full benefit of his eyes, into which he had put an entreaty which seemed at variance with the coolness of his words: "It would be ridiculous to do anything else. I am a year older than you, and this is the first day I have thought of it."

"But everyone who is older than I am doesn't call me by my Christian name," smiling at him good-humouredly.

"No, but living under the same roof with you makes all the difference. There are only two positions left for me—that of brother or lover. I choose the first, because—because the other would be useless."

"You are very good. But why not friend?"

"The two are synonymous. A man must have the heart of a jelly-fish if he could be your friend and nothing more."

"Then I know a number of jelly-fishes."

"Who are they? Dudley for instance, who looks a different man since—since—"

"Hush! you are talking nonsense," holding up her hand warningly. "Mr. Wentworth has had enough to try him—parting from his father—leaving the Chase—losing his fortune."

"And something else too," with a knowing glance. "I was away, but Phil kept me well posted up, and I had my eyes wide open when I came back."

"You generally have; I believe you are awfully proud of them," bursting out laughing.

"Sibbel!" in an accent of the deepest reproach.

"Call me a conceited ass—but you can't think it. I am proud, and I thank Heaven for it, when I see the tuft-hunters at Oxford, but conceited I never was. I shouldn't care if I were one big small-pox mark from head to foot—only the women would hate me."

"I am glad you are not, though I shouldn't hate you—you are so unlike anybody else that—"

"Well! Don't be afraid to say it—I am down in the mouth and can't be stuck up," turning eagerly towards her.

"That—a charm is too strong; but there is something nice about you."

"Thanks!" taking off his hat, and making a profound bow. "Sibbel, you are an angel."

"And you an impudent young man!"

"Not impudent, only given to speaking the truth, a habit to be encouraged between brother and sister."

"Yes; I should never have the courage to send a lie all the way to India. Guy, I am sure, would find it out long before it got there."

"One in India, the other in England; I shan't be *de trop* as a brother," said Macdonald, musingly.

"I have never given you leave to be anything of the kind," she said, with a mischievous smile.

"All right, I'll be the other thing, and you can't be angry, because I shan't be able to help it," looking inexpressibly winning as he laughed up into her face. "I was doubting between the two; but, upon my word, I think the last will be the nicest. I wish you would answer me one question—with a wistful glance—"just one, it is positively necessary for my future peace of mind. Will you?"

"Can't tell till I know what it is."

"I've scarcely the courage to ask it."



"I never knew you a coward before."  
 "But if you flew into a passion, what should I do?"  
 "Ride home without me."  
 "Impossible; I couldn't be such a cad!"  
 "Then you would have to hear it."  
 "I don't think I could; but I suppose I must. Now for it."

"Excuse me, I don't want to hear it," and she put May Queen into a sharp canter.  
 "Too bad. Fancy sentiment at this pace!" as they hurried past the hedges, where the first green buds were beginning to make their appearance.

"Just what I wanted—to put a stop to it," she called out, with a little laugh.

On reaching the Chestnut she inquired anxiously for Lord Wentworth, but he had not come down. Just as she was going into the dining-room for her *à la carte* luncheon with Hugh, Manser appeared with a message from his master to the effect that he hoped Miss Fitzgerald would excuse him till four o'clock, when he hoped to be able to take tea with her in the library. If she wished for the carriage she was to order it.

Touched by his kindly consideration for her in the midst of his many trials, she begged the man to tell him on no account to hurry downstairs unless he felt inclined for the exertion. She could make herself perfectly happy with an interesting book, and did not wish to go out in the carriage.

After luncheon she was standing by the window in the library watching the snowdrops shivering in the cold wind, when Hugh came in, already arrayed in his great-coat with the broad fur collar, which was especially becoming to his foreign style of beauty. He put his hat and stick on a chair, and came up to her.

"Two good-byes in one day," she said, trying to smile, as if it were a joke, "is too much for one person."

"I was wondering whether you would have got up for me at that unearthly hour of the morning!"

"Perhaps I might do even more than that for a friend!" anxious to disprove the effort.

"And what would 'the more' be?"

"Depends upon what he wanted. Have you seen your uncle?"

It was Hugh's habit to call Lord Wentworth his uncle, for want of a better designation, although he was no relation.

"Yes; poor old fellow!" his face softening with real feeling. "You and I must contrive to keep him up till Dudley comes back."

"I'll do my best; but I am so afraid he will be dull alone with me."

"Or you alone with him! Never mind, I shall soon be back to help you. Sibel, it was a strange thing your coming to live here, as if you were meant to be one of us really"—looking down at her thoughtfully.

"It was Mr. Wentworth who thought of it; he is so kind to everyone, he forgets nobody"—looking down.

"There never was anyone like him," rejoined Hugh, enthusiastically. "I always live in the hope that some day I may render him a great service. It's all nonsense, of course, and the opportunity will never come; but I feel as if I should like it better than anything else."

"It isn't nonsense," looking up at him with sudden sympathy. "Are you such a poor, miserable creature that you never can be a help to anybody?"

"No; but nobody wants me—I am a necessity to no one," his voice sinking.

"Indeed, but you are. I shall count the days till you come back, and Lord Wentworth looks on you as his second son."

"Do you really mean it, without humbug?" his olive cheek flushing.

"Yes, as seriously as possible, and at the Lodge, Phil is devoted to you."

"And Rose?" he said, softly, more as stating a fact than asking a question.

"Yes; and dear little Rose. She is worth all the rest"—the tears coming into her eyes, as she reflected that in all likelihood she would never see her sweet face again.

"I thought so till you came," he said, with strange frankness.

"Then you must think so still. I hate inconstancy."

"Especially when it is your own fault!"

"Yes, especially then," with uncompromising gravity.

"There's the cart," as the unwelcome sound of wheels was heard once more on the gravel.

"Good-bye! I am awfully sorry to leave you; but remember, one line to Christchurch will always bring me back. Good-bye!" squeezing her hand in a most affectionate grip. "I don't know quite which it is to be," with a laughing look into her eyes. "Is it brother or lover?" as he carried the little hand to his lips.

"Neither!" as she tore it away indignantly; but no one could be long angry with Hugh, and the next minute she was waving it forgivingly to him from the window.

She watched the dog-cart as long as she could, and turned to the fire as if for company when it had quite disappeared. In spite of her persistent denial she did feel lonely, and she could not disguise the fact from herself, as she sat on a low stool by the fender gazing at the flames with wistful eyes.

Dudley had gone, and the separation was complete, for even in his last good-bye he had neither forgiven nor forgotten. Could she have wished him to do either? Wouldn't his forgiveness or forgetfulness have shown that he never cared? And yet to know that he had cared was, perhaps, the bitterest thought of all. The tears were in her eyes, when the door opened, and she was recalled from her own sorrows by a sight of the snow-white head and patient face of Dudley's father.

He gave her a pleasant smile as she went eagerly forward to meet him.

"We must take care of each other now, my dear, as there are only two of us left. Do you think we can be trusted not to quarrel?" as he sat down in his chair, and stretched out his hands to the blaze, as if sorrow had chilled the marrow of his bones.

"I shall grumble at nothing if you will only treat me just like a daughter. Do you think you could?"

He smiled down on the pretty wistful face, which was raised so confidently to his.

"Do I think I could? I think it sounds very tempting. You shall read to me when my eyes are dim, you shall write my letters when I feel too lazy. I will tyrannize over you as if you were a paid drudge, and I were a second—second—I can't think of his name—but I mean somebody very bad."

"Tyrannize as much as you like, I shall not mind it a bit."

"You do not know what I am capable of. My valet Landon could tell you something; but he is very good, and bears with me."

"I fancy that most people would," still looking up into his thin, patrician face with admiring eyes.

"Yes, for a time!" with a sigh, as he leant back in his chair.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE COUNTESS OF WINDSOR.

THE days passed very quietly at the Chestnuts. The people of the neighbourhood had rejoiced to hear that Lord Wentworth was about to give up the Chase and establish himself on his small estate in Berkshire, but out of true delicacy of feeling they would not be too eager to welcome him, knowing that the change was a matter of necessity, not choice.

When the magnates of the county had decided that the proper interval had elapsed, they drove up to the door and left a heap of cards. No one was admitted, for Lord Wentworth did not feel equal to the exertion of entertaining visitors, and Sibel would not offer to do so by herself.

There was much gossip in the neighbourhood about her position in the peer's household. Spiteful people, who were jealous of her beauty, declared that she was nothing but an ordinary companion, and it would be absurd to include

her name in an invitation to Lord Wentworth, whilst the young men, who had happened to see her mounted on May Queen, and followed by a groom, said it was not the habit of governesses to ride about the lanes on a magnificent thoroughbred, and such a face and figure would be a perfect godsend at the Easter balls.

The dowagers of the neighbourhood had many anxious consultations on the subject, but at last came to the conclusion that it would be advisable to ignore the girl's existence.

Nobody knew who she was, or where she came from; and if she was nothing but a poor dependent it would be a mistake to lift her above her proper sphere; besides which, it was whispered that she was not bad to look at, and in that case they had some to keep out of danger.

So Mrs. Smith of the Hall, whose dance was to take place in the Easter week, sent a card to Lord Wentworth, and soon to Miss Fitzgerald.

"It seems as if they had made a mistake between us," said Lord Wentworth with a smile, as he held the card between his finger and thumb. "I am to go and dance—and you are to stay at home and sit still. What a ridiculous world it is!"

"Perhaps they did not know of my existence," and Sibel looked up with a slight flush on her face.

"I am afraid I have been selfish and kept you too much to myself," he said, gravely. "You shall come with me to Lady Windsor's this afternoon—that is," he added with his usual courtesy, "if you do not object!"

Sibel gave a willing assent, rejoiced to find that he was beginning to emerge from his solitude at last.

He might do it to-day for her sake, but when he had taken up the old habit of going into society, it might grow less distasteful to him after a time, and she was in hopes that he would continue it for his own.

As to the Smiths, one of the party certainly knew of her existence, for she had met the eldest son, Octavius, at the Rectory.

Mrs. Shaw, the rector's wife, had introduced him to her, and after talking over a cup of tea, he had gone so far as to offer to walk back with her to the Chestnuts, on the plea that it was getting late for a young lady to be out alone.

She had declined the escort rather coldly, as she had taken a great dislike to him, and suspected that his civility was the offspring of impertinence. Now she was angry at the alight that was put on her, and determined that if ever she had the misfortune to meet him at a dance, she would find no room for his name on her card.

The brougham was ordered at three o'clock, and with strict punctuality, Lord Wentworth appeared in the hall as the hour struck. He held out his ungloved hand to help Sibel into the carriage, treating the young girl with as much deference as if she had been a descendant of Royalty.

As they drove past the blossoming hedge-rows, he pointed out any object of interest that came in sight, and seemed so unusually bright and well that Sibel thought how pleased his son would be if he could only see him!

The Court was a fine old place, belonging to the Earl of Windsor, with a park stretching for miles over an undulating country, and a splendid avenue of beeches planted in the time of the Wars of the Roses, leading up to a Corinthian portico of white marble, with acanthus leaves delicately traced round the capitals.

The Hall was of vast dimensions, the vaulted roof being supported by stately pillars which matched those of the portico. A crowd of footmen in liveries of purple and gold came to the door. And a major domo, who looked as disguised as a duke, led the visitors through a succession of daintily furnished rooms, fragrant with flowers, to an inner sanctum or smaller drawing-room, where the Countess was sitting on a low sofa, talking to some friends who had happened to drop in.

She came forward with a charming smile to meet Lord Wentworth.

"Allow me to introduce to you the daughter of my old friend, Sir Edward Fitzgerald," he said directly, with a wave of his hand towards

the slight figure by his side. "She has been good enough to take pity on a lonely old man, and I recommend her particularly to your kindness."

"I am delighted to make your acquaintance," said the Countess, taking Sibel's hand in hers, and studying her blushing face with kindly eyes. "I only wish I had someone just like you to take pity on me, whenever Windsor is away from home. Lord Wentworth must spare you to me sometimes, for I, like himself, am often alone. Let me introduce you to my friends," turning to the ladies nearest to her.

"Miss Fitzgerald—Mrs. Spencer, Mrs. Smith—before long no doubt you will know them as well as I do."

Mrs. Smith shook hands cordially, thinking to herself that she had made a great mistake in ignoring this young lady whom a countess delighted to honour, and Mrs. Spencer promised that she would soon bring her daughters over to the Chestnuts, to make Miss Fitzgerald's acquaintance.

Lady Windsor would not let Lord Wentworth leave till after tea, and led the conversation to such subjects as he was likely to be interested in, so that an hour and a half passed very pleasantly. Her son, the Earl, was coming home for a fortnight at Easter, when she hoped that Mr. Macdonald, whose father was one of her oldest friends, would spend a great deal of his time at the Court.

"You must not tempt him to desert us too much," said the Viscount, with his grave smile, "for as it is, I am always afraid that Miss Fitzgerald may be frightened away by the dulness at the Chestnuts."

"Send her to me, whenever she wants a change," looking across the room to where Sibel was talking to Mrs. Spencer. "I shall be only too glad to have her. Shall you feel strong enough to take her to any of the dances this Easter?"

He shook his head. "Not strong enough or else too selfish—I am not sure which."

"Then will you let me? Now that my own daughters are married I shall be so pleased to have a pretty young girl to chaperon."

"You are too kind," with a courteous bow.

"I shall be deeply indebted to you. To tell you the truth, those balls were weighing on my mind. I felt that I could not sacrifice myself, yet it was barbaric to keep a young creature like that, with infinite capacities for enjoyment, shut up between four walls."

"Mrs. Smith is the first on the list," lowering her voice judiciously.

"She is not going there."

"I am glad of it. I should like her to make her first appearance at our own. Let her drive over in the afternoon, and I think she had better sleep here."

"Very well, and I will send the brougham for her the next morning."

"You are determined not to spare her longer than you can help," and Lady Windsor smiled.

"Have I done anything wrong?" with a look of surprise. "Surely she will be ready to come back by twelve o'clock the next morning."

"She might be ready to go, but we shall have the house full of people, and they might not be so ready to leave her."

"Think of my empty one."

"I wish you would leave it quite empty, and come over with her."

"Impossible," rising from his seat. "If you knew what a thorough anchorite I had become, you would not wish it."

"I never heard of an anchorite, with a Hebe to wait on him."

"Perhaps you never heard of a Hebe who would be willing to do it."

"No, or the anchorite profession might become crowded. Must you go? Come and see me again soon, or you will find me rapidly developing into a recluse."

"I think the recluse might honour the anchorite," bowing over the delicate hand, with old-fashioned courtesy. "Sibel, if you are ready, my dear, the carriage is at the door."

She came forward at once to say good-bye to the Countess, who whispered many pretty

speeches in her ear. Mrs. Smith would have shaken hands again, but she only bowed in passing as she preceded Lord Wentworth out of the room.

"The next time they ask you to the Hall, you shall have a cold, my dear," said the Viscount, quietly, as he arranged a tiger-skin mat over her knees. "Those people are not to my taste."

"I am so glad you don't like them," she said, eagerly. "I quite detest her, and she must be odious to wear green gloves."

"There is something worse about her than the green gloves—an utter absence of refinement in manner, as well as mind. I am afraid I can be of very little use to you, but Lady Windsor has kindly taken you off my hands, and she will be a much better guide than I, amongst the social pit-falls."

"I don't want to be taken off your hands," said Sibel, with a loving glance.

"I am afraid you would fare very badly if you were left to me," with a sigh, as he leant back wearily.

When they reached home, there were several letters lying on the hall-table, amongst which there was one large square envelope directed to Miss Fitzgerald in a masculine hand.

The colour rushed to Sibel's cheeks as she picked it up, and carried it to her room. One glance was sufficient to tell her that the letter was from Major Leighton. Was it to say he was coming? Heaven forbid!

(To be continued.)

## WILFUL, BUT LOVING.

—:—

### CHAPTER XIII.

LORD ST. CLARE betrayed not the slightest emotion on meeting his fair, false love of other days.

It was not much more than a year since they had parted, and yet already the wound was healed. The cure had begun when he saw Blanche Delaval in her true colours. It was well-nigh finished when he read the news of her wedding; and if anything was needed to complete it, it was given at last when he awoke from his feverish slumbers to see a slight, girlish figure sitting dreamily by the fireside, and hear a rich, sweet voice singing a ballad.

Mrs. Fane watched her brother in amazement. Alan talked as lightly and easily on commonplace topics as though Mrs. Smith had never played a serious part in his life.

Bee could not understand it. She waited in breathless impatience until her visitor had departed.

"Alan?"

"Well," he replied, a strange light in his dark eyes, a half-provoking smile upon his lips, "what is it? Bee, you look overwhelmed with the importance of your coming communication! Make it quickly; I'm all attention!"

"I believe you never cared for Blanche at all!"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"It looks like it!" she persisted.

Strangely stern and grave was the young Earl's face, as he answered,—

"And yet, for her sake, I broke what has always been sacred to our race—my solemn oath! I had sworn to be faithful to Dora Clifford. Under the influence of Blanche's wiles I broke that oath, treated the poor child in a manner unworthy a man, much less a peer of England! And when she had taken her fate into her own hands, and gone no one knew where, and I looked to the woman for whose sake I had sinned for consolation, what did I get? Love or sympathy? No, indeed! nothing but a curt dismissal! My passion for your husband's ward died then, Bee! Had she remained unmarried until old age I should never have sought her again!"

Bee gave a great sigh of relief.

"I am so glad! Then, Alan, you will stay in England! You cannot think how I missed you all those twelve months you were away!"

"Yes," he said, shortly, "I shall stay in England."

He did not tell her why. He hardly knew his reasons himself; only his life had never seemed quite the same since the station-master's niece left her uncle's house. From that day forward he had missed something at every turn. He did own it yet, even to himself; but a strange instinct told him that those blue eyes held his only chance of happiness; that he loved their owner with an affection as intense and strong—aye, and far purer and more unselfish than the wild passion which in other days he had entertained for Miss Delaval!

The days had dragged very slowly at the little cottage at Vale after Dora's departure. Mrs. Johnson had been busy with her household affairs, and had little leisure for her stranger-guest, who, now that he was so nearly well, seemed less dependent on her good offices.

Alan grew tired of the little house, which was dull and gloomy, he thought, without its sunshine. Still he lingered, thinking she might return!

Some strange reserve kept him from questioning her uncle and aunt. He knew they might resent his showing too much interest in their niece; and so it was only by an accident he learnt that she had left Vale—not, as he had thought, for a little while, but for always. It was not her home; she had only been a passing visitor.

He never betrayed his disappointment—never once; only, after hearing that news, he soon fixed the day for leaving Vale. The morning of his departure he said, with assumed carelessness,—

"I shall be going to London, Mrs. Johnson. Can I take any commission from you to your niece?"

She shook her head.

"I'll not trouble you, sir."

"It will be no trouble!"

But she persisted in her refusal. Mr. Clare was young, and Beatrice was a pretty girl. She would have no hand in throwing them together, and leaving the child with a heartache by-and-by; so Mrs. Johnson returned short and rather evasive replies to all her guest's remarks on the subject of her niece.

She said, frankly, her sister lived in Camberwell, in the Colville-road; but she never told him that her sister's name was D'Arcy, and that Beatrice was not really related to her at all.

Lord St. Clare went up to Kensington, and gladdened his sister's heart by making her house his headquarters. He told himself he was an idiot to think of a little village-girl, whose home would probably jar upon every refinement of his nature.

He reasoned with himself. He even went so far as to argue to himself Mrs. Johnson must have been ashamed of her sister's household, or she would have given him the exact address when he asked for it.

But it would not do. That face with its innocent, childlike beauty haunted him—those blue eyes were always before him.

At last Lord St. Clare forgot all the prejudices of his caste. He threw prudence to the winds, and one afternoon set out for Colville-road, Camberwell, with about as much idea of its locality as poor Dora herself had possessed on the cold February day when she left the shelter of Castle St. Clare to try to find her old music-master.

The Earl managed the first stage of the journey admirably. He calmly called a cab at the nearest stand to his sister's house, gave the driver the direction, and waited patiently until he got there.

It was a very long drive, and not an interesting one; but at last it was accomplished. Cobby drew up at the corner of a long, dull, uninviting-looking street, and inquired,—

"What number, sir?"

The question took Alan aback. He had expected a short road with about a dozen houses. This one stretched in its dull respectability far into the distance, and was studded on either side by a row of small houses in unbroken succession.

"Aren't there any shops?" he inquired.



Cabby shook his head.  
"None nearer than the corner, sir. Shall I stop here?"

Lord St. Clare alighted, paid the fare without a word of complaint, and passed into the shop at the corner of Colville-road. It was a post-office, so he decided fortune had at last favoured him.

"Can you tell me which house in Colville-road is Mrs. Johnson's?"

The young woman stared.

"There are over five hundred houses in the road, sir, and they nearly all take lodgers! I can lend you a directory, if you like!"

He did like, and studied the directory carefully. To his horror there were no less than ten families of the name of Johnson. Lord St. Clare returned the book abruptly.

"I shall have to give it up!" he muttered, from behind his moustache, and then he went out of the shop, and looked thoughtfully down the long, quiet road.

"I can't call upon all the Johnsons!" he decided. "I should make myself the laughing-stock of the road. Oh! Beatrice, how hard it is to find you out, and yet harder far to give up all hope of meeting you again!"

He was not favourably impressed with the Colville-road—its uniformity wearied him. The longer he walked there the more certain he felt that his search was all in vain. As easy find a needle in a bundle of hay as an inhabitant of that long, straight road, without the precise number of his abode!

He was turning to retrace his steps when he heard the sound of his own name, and a familiar hand was laid upon his arm.

"Alan, old fellow, is it possible?"

The two men shook hands warmly. Their greeting was as demonstrative as Englishmen ever permit themselves to be—their meeting was an equal surprise and pleasure.

"What on earth are you doing here?" cried Herbert. "It is the very last place in the world I should have thought of meeting you, even if I had known you were in England!"

Lord St. Clare explained the railway accident, and his sojourn at his sister's; but he tacitly avoided the question as to his presence in Colville-road.

"Camberwell's a long way from Kensington," said Mr. Cecil, quietly. "I shouldn't have thought it had any attractions for you!"

"Or I for you!"

"Oh, a scribbler goes anywhere in search of characters! Besides, Alan, I have friends here. Yes—as he saw the Earl's disdained glance at the long, straight road—"valued friends too! That's why you find me here. I have just been having a cup of tea with them."

Alan started. He smiled mischievously.

"Ten at half-past four! My dear fellow, I think I understand. You are contemplating matrimony, and the future Mrs. Cecil resides in Colville-road. I beg your pardon a thousand times for my disparaging mention of the locality."

"No!" said Herbert with a strange, sad smile. "You are quite wrong, Alan."

Arm-in-arm the two men left Camberwell. Alan's search, if not given up, was at least over for that day.

There was much to say and hear, and before long they touched upon the subject uppermost in both their minds.

"Have you heard anything of her, Herbert?"

"Nothing!"

"It is over a year now."

"Aye, poor child!"

"What do you think it means?"

"How can I tell?"

"You must have formed some opinion."

Herbert sighed.

"I think, Alan, that innocent, unformed girl was a woman in one thing. I think she had learned to love you!"

A great anguish was written on Alan's brow.

"I shall never forgive myself, Herbert—never while I live."

"And loving you," continued Herbert, "without return—without any hope of return—she found life's battle all too hard for her."

"You mean she took her life? Why at the time you—"

"I do not mean that!" interrupted the author, quickly. "I believe that Dora Clifford is dead. She was so young, so inexperienced, she could never have hidden herself all these months. Besides, who would have supported her? No, Alan, depend upon it her troubles are over. She sleeps in some lonely grave, and you are, in very deed and truth, master of Castle St. Clare and its revenues."

The two friends saw a great deal of each other in the weeks that followed, but though they conversed on many things—though Herbert confided to the Earl all his future hopes of fame, and Alan openly consulted him as to the puzzling uncertainty of his own position—each kept back one secret.

Lord St. Clare never mentioned the blue-eyed fairy he had first seen at Vale in the winter fire-light; and Herbert spoke no word of the creature who had won the whole love of his manhood—whom he knew as Beatrice D'Arcy.

It was a brilliant season, but Lord St. Clare mingled very little in its pleasures. While it was still uncertain whether his income was four hundred pounds a year or that sum multiplied by two hundred and fifty, he did not care for the society of strangers; he was seeking a diplomatic post, and hoped to hear of one before long. In the meantime he remained at Mrs. Fane's—a welcome and much-loved guest.

It was just one week after his chance encounter with Blanche Delaval—we should say Mrs. Montgomery Smith—that coming down to breakfast, he found amongst his letters, one addressed in a hand entirely unknown to him.

He took it up curiously. He knew at a glance it came from a woman, and save for his sister, there was hardly any lady in the world likely to correspond with him. The post-mark told nothing, being simply Charing-cross.

With a strangely puzzled look upon his face Alan broke the seal. An instinct told him that letter would have an important influence on his fate; but he little guessed then how important—still less that the writer of the letter was the girl for want of whom a strange blank filled his heart.

It was very short and very simple. There was no heading, no beginning. "March 20th" was written in one line; in the next the note itself began.

Alan read as one in a dream. For a moment he seemed to have gone back to the days when people had secret means of divining another's thoughts.

It seemed to him that by some strange—some almost miraculous instinct—his correspondent had guessed his most secret reflections.

"I have heard that you are back in England, and that she for whose sake your heart was sealed against me, is another's wife. I write this—I swear it before Heaven—with no wish to bring back to your mind the few brief weeks in which I was called your betrothed. Only it has come into my thoughts that, being generous and brave, and of a true and tender nature—which I feel you are, although you could not help your dislike for me—some anxiety respecting my fate may haunt you. It may be even that you will hesitate in choosing a partner for your life from a vague fear that I may some day rise up before you and allege some claim to my grandfather's riches. Cousin Alan, I write to dispel these few fears for ever. I may have a long life before me, but never in all the years the future may hold for me—never, I say, will you be disturbed in the possession of all I freely believe is yours in right, if not in law. As soon as I am of age I shall sign a formal declaration of renunciation. Till then you can rely upon my word. And for the other fear, no remorseful thoughts of me need trouble you. I am well and happy"—(there was a pause then, as though she had hesitated what words to use). "I have friends who love me dearly, and more to interest me and fill my life than many girls whose childhood has been more joyous—whose early youth more tenderly watched over than hers who once was

Alan read this letter to the end, then he began again at the beginning; three times over did he read the simple lines before he at all realized their meaning. Then a great thankfulness filled his heart.

It was not the knowledge that he would have the wealth almost indispensable to his title that filled his heart with joy; it was the certainty that the girl he had refused had come to no sad end—filled no nameless grave. He put an explanation upon the ending.

"She has married, of course!" was his comment. "But whom? I am certain in the old time she cared for me. And, poor child! she was not beautiful enough, not brilliant enough, for any man to be content to take her without possessing her heart."

Mrs. Fane wondered at his abstraction, but she asked no questions. Alan volunteered no explanation. He meant to go to his friend, Herbert Cecil, and ask his opinion of the strangely-worded letter.

He had not seen Herbert for some days. The author had declared himself too busy to accept any invitations to Kensington; but on such an affair as this Alan had no scruples about invading his retreat.

It was a beautiful spring morning, and the Earl strolled across the beautiful gardens, which were near his sister's house, with a strange feeling of hope and faith. The trees were budding; the earliest one that is—the almond blossoms—were in flower.

The sky above his head was as blue and cloudless as in Italy, and the loveliness of the scene around him gave the Earl's thoughts a strangely hopeful impetus.

"Dora was always truthful!" he reflected, gravely. "Poor child! she means just what she says. Her letter brings me two blessings. That heavy weight of remorse is lifted from my heart, and I am once more master of Castle St. Clare! I am free—utterly, entirely free. Of her own act and deed she releases me once again. I have no one to study, no one to consult. I am rich enough to make my wife's life a dream of luxury, but I shall never have a wife unless I can find the girl whom I saw once watching my slumbers like a guardian angel. Beatrice, my darling! to find you—to win your heart—shall be my life's work. You are innocent and guileless. You know me only as plain Mr. Clare; I will not undecieve you until I have your promise to give yourself to me. Then, and then only, shall you hear all I have to offer you!"

A little robin sat on a tree chirping merrily. Alan was not a superstitious man, and yet it seemed to him an omen of success.

"I will find her!" he cried to himself. "If it takes years, if I have to serve for her as patiently as the patriarch of old served for Rachel, she shall yet be mine—my wife, my darling!" And with the smile this glad thought caused him yet upon his face, he rang the bell of Herbert's lodgings, and asked the servant whether Mr. Cecil was at home.

"No, sir."

It was his first visit. He was a stranger to the little maid, who could not, of course, divine his title.

"Will he be long?"

"I can't say, sir."

"I want to see him particularly," explained Alan. "Don't you know at all when he will be in?"

The Abigail reflected. At last she remembered Mr. Cecil was coming in to lunch. It was barely twelve then, but Alan's impatience to see his friend conquered his dislike to possibly more than an hour's solitude. He expressed his intention of waiting, and was shown into Herbert's little sitting-room.

It was natural, in his excited state, he should pace the room instead of seating himself. It was natural he should scrutinize with friendly eyes the many objects of vertu and curiosities the author had brought from abroad. But these detained his attention for a very brief time. He was growing heartily tired of his lonely waiting when he noticed a picture at the end of the room in one of those frames so common nowadays, which are made with a gate to fall over

"DORA CLIFFORD."

the portrait, and, at will, hide its features from too curious eyes.

By some strange forgetfulness this "gate" had not been locked. Alan touched the spring. It flew back and exposed to view the face, graven so faithfully on his memory, which he had first seen in his sick-room at Vale.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

THERE was no mistake about the recognition. It was no mere resemblance, however strong, to the station-master's niece which struck Alan Lord St. Clare as he contemplated the fair face in his friend's sitting-room. It was herself. He felt so convinced—so positive it was—so that no doubt once entered his head. She was found. The long, weary search he had feared would never be needed, now Herbert would give him her address. In a few months he should be back at Castle St. Clare with a fair wife beside him.

It never entered his ideas that the station-master's niece would refuse the honour offered her. True, he believed his sunbeam—so in his heart he fondly termed her—all that was pure and true; but that he should be unable to teach her to love him never crossed his mind. He felt like a wanderer almost in sight of home as he sat and waited with an ever-growing impatience for Herbert's return.

One question certainly troubled him. How had Herbert become possessed of the picture? It was no mere photograph; it was a wonderfully faithful painting—a little imperfect and unfinished, perhaps, as a work of art, but as a resemblance extremely happy. The artist had caught the exact tint of the bright hair, the precise expression of the blue eyes. It seemed to Alan, as he watched the portrait, that it grew more life like every moment.

How had Mr. Cecil become possessed of that picture? What was its original to him? These were the questions which tortured Lord St. Clare. He remembered his meeting with the author in Colville-road, and how he had spoken of taking tea with friends—it all fitted in perfectly, every detail. The Johnson's tea hour was four o'clock; of course their relations were not more aristocratic in their habits.

"He knows her!" cried Alan, with a bitter sigh. "All these months that I have been wondering where she was he has enjoyed her intimate companionship; and how could he do that without loving her? Perhaps she loves him back! Berte, I would grudge you no highborn heiress; but this village-girl—this field flower—I wanted for myself!"

He was so lost in thought that when at last his friend's long-expected footstep was heard he never needed it. Herbert found him seated in an easy-chair, one hand shading his troubled brow.

"What on earth has happened to bring your lordship to such an unfashionable part of the world?" cried the author, cordially. "Why, Alan, you look as miserable as if you had lost a fortune! and your pertinacity about seeing me and patience in awaiting my return has driven the servant nearly into hysterics. She takes an interest in me, you see, and fears you are a sheriff's officer come to arrest me for debt! I've been trying to comfort her by telling her I don't owe a farthing in the world."

While he spoke he busied himself at the sideboard, and now produced a decanter and some glasses. He poured out his old brown sherry with a lavish hand and passed the glass to Alan.

"You must be tired to death of waiting."

To his own intense surprise the Earl almost staggered as he rose.

"I believe I've had a shock, Herbert. Read that!"

He gave him Dora Clifford's letter, and the author opened it in silence. Lord St. Clare turned away his face. He was thinking how he could introduce the other subject. So engrossed was he with this thought that he never looked at his friend's countenance as he read the letter—never noticed the unconscionable delay he made in returning it.

At the first sight of the writing Herbert's features had grown pale and set; as he read on his lips—strong man as he was—twitched nervously as a woman's. This was the reflection in his heart.

"Fool that I was never to have divined her secret! Why, when she told me her secret, and why my hopes could never be realised, I ought to have known the truth! And she loves him still! Love breathes out in every line of this letter. Oh, what a cruel mockery it all seems! But one thing I can do for her; I can guard her secret! He shall never know that Beatrice D'Arcy is his sometime fiancée, Dora Clifford!"

"Well!"

The speaker was Lord St. Clare. He had, it seemed to him, waited long enough for his friend's verdict on the letter. He stretched out his hand to reclaim it, repeating,—

"Well!"

"It is a true woman's letter," said Herbert, battling bravely with his own pain. "Your cousin has the making of a noble character, Alan!"

"And you think—"

"I do not think at all. I believe her own words. You have no more to fear from Dora Clifford than if she were dead and buried!"

"But her husband!"

"Who?"

"Her husband! Of course there is no doubt she is married. The very reading of her letter shows it," quoting, "who once was Dora Clifford!"

"Ah!" not caring to contradict the mistake for reasons of his own. "Her husband will think as she does."

"Well, that letter has robbed me of a nightmare."

"And now you will take your proper place. Now all London will hear of the gay doings of Lord St. Clare."

"I don't think I care much for gaiety. We shall live mostly at Castle St. Clare."

"We!" and he laughed in spite of that strange pain at his heart. "That little word tells a great deal, Alan! Of whom does the 'we' consist?"

"She is a friend of yours!"

Herbert threw up his hands.

"I have no lady friends with whom you are acquainted!"

Alan strove to conquer his emotion.

"Her picture is in that frame. Herbert, do you remember the day you met me in Camberwell? I had gone there in search of her."

"In search of whom?"—coldly. "Remember, please, you are talking in riddles!"

"Of the original of that portrait!"

Cecil hesitated.

"That can hardly be," he said at last. "I myself could hardly show you the original of that sketch. It was a labour of love, done from memory at odd moments. It is what you call an ideal picture. I clothed the face with day-dreams of my own."

"I tell you, Herbert, it is the likeness of the only woman who will ever be my wife!"

"And I tell you, Alan, it is a fancy sketch, done from memory, of a face you have never seen!"

"How do you know?"

"Because its owner has hardly returned from Italy six months. I have been a constant visitor at her home ever since, and I have never met you there."

"Listen. Her name is Johnson; she—"

"I never in my life knew anyone of that name, Alan. The young lady whose face has brought about this discussion, is an orphan. Her guardians chanced to think themselves under an obligation to me, and so I have had the run of the house. Her uncle is a man anyone would feel it an honour to know. He is a genius!"

"Then they are not common people!"

"Assuredly not! Is that?"—and he pointed to the picture—"A common face! Do common people send their children to study music at an Italian conservatoire?"

"No, but—"

"But you have made a mistake. Alan, believe

me it is so. That young lady is a true and trusted friend of mine; but for an accident, it would have been impossible for you to have seen her face. I do not think you ought to take advantage of the circumstance to cross-examine me as to my private affairs."

"You speak sternly!"

"I feel it, Alan. A man's home is sacred to himself; anyone who lights by mistake upon his secrets ought to respect them!"

"And you will marry her?"

"I did not say so."

"I wish you would introduce me to her."

"What! that a titled earl among her acquaintances might make her ambitious!"

"No."

Herbert laid his hand affectionately on his friend's shoulder.

"No cloud has ever marred our friendship yet; I pray it never may. Only, Alan, remember there is one subject on which I cannot bear cross-questioning or careless talk, even from you!"

"And that is—"

Herbert glanced towards the sketch—the other understood. In perfect silence they exchanged a warm hand-shake; then Alan turned abruptly and left the room, while Herbert took down a book and tried to read.

But his thoughts would wander from the printed page in spite of all his efforts to collect them. In vain he tried to bury himself in the novelist's story. The story of real life, the letter which Alan had shown him, and the knowledge of what the writer must have suffered in penning it—all this filled his mind.

It was impossible to read. He flung the book aside, and after a heavy pretence at lunch, he hurriedly took his hat and left the house. The beauty of the Spring day was clouded over now. The sun had hidden his face, but Herbert Cecil cared little for the weather's gloomy, threatening aspect. He was going to Colville-road. What he meant to say to Dora Clifford he hardly knew; but one thing was certain—he would tell her he had discovered her disguise!

What had Lord St. Clare's questions meant. He had had no suspicion of the truth; he had not dreamed the girl whose face he admired was the writer of the letter which relieved his mind from a heavy sorrow.

"There cannot be two such faces!" thought Herbert, bitterly. "Can he have seen her anywhere and fancied himself in love with her? But no; he asked if she belonged to 'common people.' He spoke of her as 'Beatrice Johnson.' It is some faded resemblance that struck him—nothing more."

He found Michael D'Arcy and his niece alone. The mistress of the house had gone to London shopping. The musician sat before the piano, humming an air to which he was trying to set some plaintive verses. Beatrice—Herbert liked to think of her by that name best—was on a low chair near him, her lovely eyes fixed in space; her expression one of dreamy expectancy.

They both received their guest warmly. The musician understood the truth now that his friend had wished to marry the beautiful wanderer who was his adopted niece, and she had refused. He almost wondered at it. Herbert Cecil seemed to him just the man to win a girl's fancy, but he never uttered a word of surprise or reproach.

He welcomed Cecil cordially, as he had ever done. He never let him know he had discovered his secret.

"You look tired."

The author spoke to Beatrice, and he only told her the truth. Her beautiful eyes had a strange, unsettled expression; one would almost have said from looking at her that she had lately gone through some mental crisis—some trying ordeal.

"She is getting nervous!" said D'Arcy, good humouredly. "The time is drawing near, you see, Mr. Cecil. In a fortnight's time it will be settled whether my little girl is to be the star of the coming season."

"And are you not anxious Miss D'Arcy?"

"I!" her eyes avoided meeting his. "I think I am unsettled. I shall be glad when the shirteenth is over. Everything seems in a ferment; there



is no rest, no quiet! Uncle has set his heart upon my success."

"And you appear as—"

"Amina, in *La Sonnambula*."

"It is too hackneyed!" said D'Arcy, a little discomfited; "but the child would have nothing else."

"Shall you be there?"

She turned her flashing eyes upon Cecil as he spoke. He lounged to say one word to her, that he would be ready to follow her to the world's end.

"Shall you be there? Is it next Saturday week?"

"So near as that! I hardly know. I am torn in two ways, Miss D'Arcy. It is always a rare pleasure to me to hear your voice, and yet hearing it on Saturday will not be what old times have been to me."

"Why?"

"You have sung to me as a friend," he said, gently. "On Saturday I shall be but one amid the hundreds who compose your audience."

"You will be a friend still!" put in Michael D'Arcy, quietly. "Beatrice never changes. I tell her she has the most constant nature I ever knew. A friend once with her is a friend always, Mr. Cecil!"

"I pray I may always deserve the title!"

And yet very soon he was to forfeit all right to it. He, who had loved her as women are not often loved, was to deceive her cruelly—to well-nigh blight her life through the wild passion men call love, and its terrible sister, jealousy.

Mr. D'Arcy was called away to see someone on business. He made no difficulty about leaving the two young people together. A Bohemian and an artist, there seemed to him no harm in *côte à côte* between a beautiful girl and an honourable man. For the rest he trusted Herbert entirely, and he knew he was devoted heart and soul to beautiful, lonely Beatrice.

When they were left alone Mr. Cecil relapsed into silence. Instinctively he drew his chair a little nearer Beatrice; but he spoke no word.

It was she who began the conversation.

"Is anything the matter?"

He answered shortly and conclusively,—

"Yes!"

"What is it?" laying one of her white hands on his with the ease and freedom of a sister. "You promised long ago that we should be friends! Won't you tell me what troubles you?"

He put up one hand to support his aching head. He hardly knew what to say; only he must tell her he knew all!

"I have had a terrible shock!"

The blue eyes were full of sympathy.

"Have you lost anyone, dear to you, by death?"

"No!"

"Then, it is not hopeless! Only one sorrow is not to be comforted—losing our loved ones by death!"

He shook his head impatiently.

"A dead sorrow is better than a living one!" he cried. "Beatrice, I have seen the man who wrecked your life! He, for whose sake my love can win no return!"

She was pale as death.

"You cannot know my secret!" she murmured. "No one could have told you—it is impossible!"

"No one told me it, I divined it! When Lord St. Clare put your letter in my hands the explanation came on me like a sudden sensation! I wondered how I could have been so blind as not to guess before that Beatrice D'Arcy was Dora Clifford!"

She gave one bitter sob of mingled grief and humiliation. Then he went on,—

"It is strange that the lonely girl I pined long ago should be the beautiful woman who holds my heart in her grasp now! And when he came to me, triumphant, and put your letter, mockingly, into my hands—although he is my life-long friend, although I have held him dearer than a brother—I could have knocked him down!"

Her tears were falling fast.

"I do not understand!" she said, brokenly.

"Why should Lord St. Clare show my letter to you? Why should he triumph at receiving it?"

"It gives him wealth and station; it assures him you will trouble him no more, and that he is free to seek an alliance worthy to console him for the loss of Miss Delaval!"

Dora Clifford looked on him with grave thoughtful eyes.

"Then Lord St. Clare accepts my letter!"

"He accepts it entirely! Oh! child, I wish you had never written it!"

"Why?"

"Do you think it costs me nothing to know that the gift I yearned for is poured out freely on one who despises it! Who could smile at your infatuation!"

The venom was taking effect.

After all, Dora was the grandchild of a hundred earls—a maiden of high degree.

"He ought not to have shown you my letter," she said, slowly. "He ought not to discuss me with any living creature. I give up all to him. He might, at least, respect my sacrifices enough to hold it sacred!"

"He might! But Alan has no high standard of womanhood."

"And yet his sister is good and noble!"

"Aye! but a man judges women from others than his sister. Miss Delaval—"

"She wrecked his life!" said Dora, wearily. "I know that! Why trouble to repeat it?"

"She did something more. She destroyed his faith in womanhood! If Alan ever marries now it will be for ambition, and he will choose a wife too cold to exact or expect more than friendly courtesy at his hands; and he will turn himself in the beauty of other smiles to make up for the want in his home!"

"You are his friend!" she said sternly. "Ought you to malign him?"

"While he was what I once believed him I was his friend. Now that he has turned into what I most detest, a male Rite, I have only scorn for him."

"You may misjudge him."

"I fear not! At this present moment his time is pretty equally divided between paying attentions to Lady Edinger Carr, the belle of the day, and wild searches after a little village girl—a Miss Johnson, who nursed him after the railway accident, and who, he thinks, once found, would beguile the tedium of the hours when he is not Lady Edinger's sworn cavalier!"

He did not look at her—he dared not.

As he spoke these cruel words he only knew that she had risen from her chair—that she put one hand upon his arm.

"You have said you love me. It may or may not be true. In this world people make strange mistakes about their own hearts, for the sake of that professed love. Do me one boon!"

"A thousand."

"No, only one! Promise me that no act or word of yours shall reveal my secret to Lord St. Clare; that he shall never know from you his deep-seated cousin, Dora Clifford, is Beatrice D'Arcy!"

Herbert bent over her hand and kissed it.

"I swear it!" he answered, calmly.

As he walked homewards that evening, he thought he knew something of the feelings of Judas—he, who had once been the soul of honour had betrayed his own dearest friend—had traduced him unjustly.

His fall was like the ruin of so many other noble souls—for a woman's sake!

## CHAPTER XV.

THE 30th of March came. A crowded audience thronged every seat in the Prince's Opera House.

Mr. Gordon was in a fever of anxiety; he himself believed implicitly in Mademoiselle D'Arcy's genius. But the debut of a new artist was always a trying ordeal, and in this case popular interest had been largely excited. It was known that the prima donna was English. It was rumoured that she was of humble birth, and curiosity had been raised to its highest pitch.

There is no need for us to dwell on that evening—no need to tell how Michael D'Arcy's prophecy was fulfilled; how the girl who had come to the opera-house unknown, untried, left it amid the plaudits of a crowd of aristocracy.

The musician placed his niece in the shabby cab that was waiting for them, fastened her cloak more closely round her, for the night was bitterly cold, and then, taking his place at her side, they commenced their drive in perfect silence.

Michael D'Arcy was touched to the heart at the apathy of the girl's manner. He had known for a long time that there was a secret in her life—a closed chamber in her heart—but he had thought such success as this would have atoned for all.

And now, when her triumph was certain, when the manager himself had congratulated and thanked her, when a crowd of floral trophies reposed on the seat opposite her, there was no joy on her face, no light in her eyes, she sat calm and still, almost as a marble statue.

"Beatrice!"

His voice moved her. It was characteristic of the girl that she never forgot a kindness shown her—that she clung to this man, who had befriended her in her distress, with a grateful affection almost filial.

She turned to him with a smile.

"Are you satisfied?"

"Satisfied is no word for it! I am surprised, delighted! Beatrice, do you know what you have done! To-morrow your name will be in everyone's mouth! You will be the darling of the musical world!"

She raised her blue eyes to his face.

"How do people feel when they succeed?"

"Glad, excited, and happy!"

She shook her head.

"I am glad, very glad! I do not think I could have borne to fail and disappoint you, but I am not triumphant. Those people did not care for me; my voice pleased them, that was all!"

D'Arcy stroked her fair hair caressingly.

"You love your art, my child!"

"Yes, I love it," she answered, wearily. "Only I am tired. I shall get used to it in time, but the noise and the bustle almost killed me, and the glare of the footlights bewildered me."

Next week the critics spoke. Notices of the new Amina appeared in all the newspapers, and for once the criticisms were alike. Everyone with one voice praised the grace and talent, the beauty and charms of Mademoiselle D'Arcy.

Mr. Gordon was enchanted. He came himself all the way to Colville-road to convey his congratulations.

"And now," he said, with the air of one who states a positive fact, "one thing is certain—you must move!"

Mr. and Mrs. D'Arcy looked thunderstruck. Their ward alone found words.

"Why!—we are very happy here!"

"Why?" asked Mr. Gordon, laughing. "My dear mademoiselle, you don't suppose you can remain in retirement! You will be inundated with invitations!"

"Well!"

"And you could not accept them if you lived here—an hour's drive from fashionable parts!"

"I like Camberwell," declared Beatrice. "I have no wish to go anywhere grander."

"Mr. Gordon is right!" said the musician, quietly. "I ought to have thought of it myself. This is not a fit place for the leading singer of the day; but we love the old home too well to give it up! What do you say to our taking a little furnished house at the West End, just for the time Beatrice is engaged at the opera?"

"The money?" suggested the girl, quickly.

"I owe you so much already!"

But Mr. Gordon was not a mean man. He paid his *protégée* a liberal salary; and Michael told her the rent of a small furnished house would be a mere bagatelle, and so it was settled.

The next week they removed to Rose Bank, Regent's Park; and if poor Mrs. D'Arcy felt decidedly out of her element in her new sur-

roundings she was too kind-hearted to complain.

It was just as the manager had said, Beatrice D'Arcy became the fashion. Very soon she had more invitations for the nights when she was free than she could possibly accept. Engagements to sing at private concerts flocked in; but these she never willingly accepted, only sometimes she found it impossible to refuse.

Herbert Cecil was her constant and devoted attendant; but others vied with him in their admiration of the beautiful singer. Before she had been a month on the stage more than one man had thrown his hand and fortune at her feet.

It was not only her talents they admired. She had a nameless grace, an unmistakable air of aristocracy, which impressed strangers at first sight. Men respected her as they did their own sisters. There was nothing fast or dashing about her; she seemed to them like a beautiful, pure white flower.

She recognised many of the people she had met during that short visit to Castle St. Clare—Blanche Delaval and her husband, looking very much bored with each other's society; Beatrice Fane and the Captain in the stalls, a keen enjoyment written on their faces.

These came not once but several times to hear the "new singer;" but the auditor for whom Dora waited and longed still tarried!

At last, when she began to think he had left England, one night she saw him. Her heart beat quickly! He was in a box with several ladies. One of them, a tall brunette, sat at his right hand, and seemed to engross his attention.

Thus much Beatrice D'Arcy noticed as she stood in the background; then, as she advanced, and a burst of applause for one moment silenced her, she raised her blue eyes fearlessly to the box and saw a strange sudden recognition written on the Earl's face! His expression softened, an eager light brightened his eyes, but the prima donna bestowed him no other glance.

She threw herself heart and soul into her part; she sang with a sweetness, a passionate intensity, her admirers said she had never shown before!

At the end of the second act a perfect shower of bouquets fell around her, and one of them from the hands of Lord St. Clare! Her conduct then was singular. The tenor, who played the part of her lover, collected the bouquets, and offered the largest and most delicate to her. The others were more than he could well carry. Mademoiselle D'Arcy carelessly knocked it aside, and, stooping with a rare grace, selected from among the mass of flowers in her companion's hand, a fragrant bunch of white roses.

They both retired, and Alan saw his flowers alone discarded on the stage! What did it mean? He meant to know!

He was not a frequent opera-goer, but for days his sister had tormented him with praises of Mademoiselle D'Arcy. He had chanced to meet the Duke of Marton that day and been invited to dinner *en famille*; he found the whole party were intending to go to the Prince's Opera, so he had hardly any excuse for not accompanying them.

He knew that Society had destined Lady Elinger Law for his wife; that the young lady admired him; that she was cold and sensible, prudent and even-tempered, suited in every way to make a nobleman a charming wife, and to train his children—Heaven sent him any—in the way they should go. Poor Alan's love affairs had ended so badly—his first choice had deserted him, his second was lost in a veil of mystery—that he was almost inclined to forewear the tender passion—he wanted to marry and settle down. After all, it was not a wife for himself that was needed so much as a mistress for his house—a mother for his future children. To both these roles the Lady Elinger was admirably suited. Alan's mind was wavering when he accompanied her to the opera.

And there suddenly appeared before him the object of his search—the girl to find whom had for more than four months been his chief desire.

He recognised her at once. True, she wore the picturesque dress of an Italian peasant—true, her beautiful hair floated loosely over her shoulders, and her arms were bare. Nothing could have been more different than this attire from the one in which he had seen her last; but yet Alan felt certain of her identity. She raised her blue eyes for a moment to his box, and after that all doubts were over.

It was she—the creature whose voice had fallen sweetly on his ear as he lay sick and prostrated. It was she, the girl he had prayed to lay her cool hand upon his burning head—more beautiful than ever, a little older, a little graver too, for genius is a hard mistress; but there was no mistaking that face and voice.

Did she know him?

Alan would have given much to answer the question. He believed she did; and yet she scorned his flowers. Her action was too marked to have been unpremeditated. What did it all mean?

The Ladies Law were due at a ball about midnight, and so they left the opera before it was quite over. Alan saw them to their carriage, and then returned breathlessly to the theatre. He had a slight acquaintance with the manager; and, meeting him on the grand staircase, he went straight to the point and begged for an introduction to Mademoiselle D'Arcy.

"I thought you were proof against all beauties, Lord St. Clare!"

"I think I recognise in Mademoiselle D'Arcy an old friend. I wish to be sure if it is so."

The manager smiled.

"She is not apt to claim acquaintance with gentlemen; a very proud and distant young lady, indeed! That is her character."

"And you'll take me behind!"

"With pleasure, only I cannot guarantee your seeing Mademoiselle. Sometimes she does not honour the green-room for nights together."

Alan felt puzzled.

"Will you tell me one thing—is her real name D'Arcy?"

"Assuredly!" and the manager's voice spoke to his belief in his own words. "I have known her uncle for years, and his father before him, but always under the name of D'Arcy."

They had reached the green room by this time.

Many stood about in careless chat, for the curtain had fallen, and the opera was over, but the face for which Alan sought was not there.

The manager left to make inquiry, and then returned to the young Earl.

"She has gone home!"

"Ah!" disappointedly.

"Shall I give you her address?"

Alan shook his head.

"I am quite sure in my own mind she is the young lady I remember; but I don't think I should be bold enough to go and call upon her and tell her so."

"Well, she plays again on Thursday and Saturday; but you are sure to meet her somewhere before long—she goes everywhere. She is the fashion just now; with her voice and her beauty she has taken the world by storm."

The young Earl went home, but not to sleep. He quite forgot all about Lady Elinger. He had room in his heart but for one thought—Beatrice, and why she so deliberately spurned his gift!

It happened that the next night he was engaged to go to a large ball. Besides the attractions of dancing, the evening commenced with a concert, and some of the first artists of the day had been secured.

Lord St. Clare went to the party with the Ladies Law. He mostly did go into society under their auspices. It saved him trouble, and so long as Lady Elinger had no real claims on him he did not mind appearing in public at her side.

The party arrived quite early, and the musical portion of the entertainment had hardly begun.

Lord St. Clare secured a programme, and discovered that Mademoiselle D'Arcy was to sing two solos.

For him the whole entertainment centred on those ballads.

She came. Her toilet was simple to a degree

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and yet in perfect taste—a long flowing dress of the material known as nun's veiling—then in the infancy—trimmings of turquoise blue, and real forget-me-nots in her beautiful hair.

Alan was at Lady Ellinger's side. He forgot her claims on his allegiance.

"What a sweet voice!" he cried, when the first song was finished. "Lady Ellinger, did you ever hear such a divine voice!"

"She has been taught well," chimed in.

"Taught! no teaching could produce such a voice as that. Ha! they have encored her; and no wonder! She deserves it!"

"It is intensely hot," complained Lady Ellinger; "could we not go somewhere out of the crowd?"

He took her into the conservatory, but if she had hoped to bring about a long *à-dé-tête* she was disappointed.

Alan hardly spoke.

At last the strains of the band sounded, and a gentleman appearing in search of Lady Ellinger, who had accepted him as partner for the first dance, Alan was left alone.

He did not linger in the conservatory. He went straight back to the drawing-room, and there, at his own sister's side, he saw Made-moiselle D'Arcy.

Some strange instinct had brought these two together.

Mrs. Fane, a large-hearted, generous woman, could not see that the fact of Miss D'Arcy singing for money took away from her beauty or talents. She spoke to her as a friend and equal.

"Here is my brother!" as Alan advanced. And then she introduced them in due form; and seeing her hostess looking entreatingly towards her she went forward to assist in the hopeless task of providing the ugliest girls in the room with partners.

Left alone, Alan Lord St. Clare felt struck suddenly dumb.

"I needed no introduction!" he said at last. "I had not forgotten my gentle nurse."

The blue eyes looked up at him in deep surprise.

"Are you labouring under some delusion, Lord St. Clare?"

"I could not be mistaken," he said, quickly. "You are the Beatrice I saw at Vale?"

She answered nothing.

"You cannot deny it!"

Then she said, coldly,—

"It is hardly worth while contradicting people who make such absurd mistakes. I was in Italy last year for some months; since that I have been at home."

"And you are not Mrs. Johnson's niece?"

"I have very few relatives. None, I am sure, of that name."

Alan looked like a man walking in his sleep.

"I cannot understand it," he said, feverishly.

"It is very simple," she said, with inflexible composure. "You have mistaken me for someone else. It is not very flattering to me, but I will forgive you."

She made him a little chilling curtsy, let fall the long train of her soft, white dress, and swept past him like some injured spirit of the night, leaving him in a state of mind easier to imagine than describe.

(To be continued.)

## FACETIÆ

TOM: "After all, what are kisses good for?" Kitty (demurely): "Their face value."

THE BRIDE: "I don't want to have any trouble with you, Bridget." The Cook: "Then, bedad, ma'am, let me hear no complaints."

MR. FARKS: "Don't you think my wife paints very nicely?" Miss Millburn: "Charming! It makes her look so much younger, I think."

ETHEL: "How harmonious the colour of everything in this church is." Margaret: "Yes, excepting the sexton. Why doesn't he wear stained glasses?"

YOUNG BRIDE: "I didn't accept Tom the first time he proposed." Miss Rival (slightly nervous): "I know you didn't." "How do you know?" "You weren't there."

"THE BROWNS," she said, "are going to lodge in the same house as us at Blackpool this year." "Too bad!" he replied. "They're nice people, and I should like to remain on friendly terms with them."

"FREDDIE, do you know what the Bible says about a lie?" asked his mother with feigned severity. "Yesh, ma'am," replied Freddie: "A lie is an abomination unto the Lord and a very refuge in time of trouble."

WEEK: "My wife locks the front door, and then I lock it." ROAD: "What's that for?" WEEK: "I don't propose to have her get me out of a warm bed to go down and see if she has locked it."

THEIR MOTHER: "Girls, we mustn't worry your father about going to Douglas this summer; I know his finances are extremely low. I looked in his cheque-book yesterday, and he only had one cheque left."

YOUNG WIFE: "I don't like that cooking-school teacher at all. She has neither patience nor consideration. She's actually cruel." HUSBAND: "Great Scott! She doesn't really make you eat the things, does she?"

MIRANDA (visiting city friends): "My, here's her visitin' card." Miranda's Husband: "What does it say?" Miranda: "It says she's at home Thursdays. Wonder where she stops rest of the time?"

SHE: "Oh, dearest! let me comb your hair." Dearest: "No." SHE: "Well, let me rub your forehead with eau-de-Cologne." Dearest: "For Heaven's sake, where's the bonnet bill? Give it to me and I'll pay it."

"I AM not at all certain," said the father, "that my daughter loves you sufficiently to warrant me entrusting her to your keeping." "Well," replied the young man, "perhaps you haven't had the same advantages for observing things as I have."

"It's queer," said the young widow, "that poor, dear John never said a word to me about marrying again." "I don't see anything so very remarkable about that," rejoined her bachelor uncle. "I suppose you are not the one he thought it was his duty to warn."

"WHY," said the farmer's wife, "I hear your old man ain't doing nothing nowadays but reading poetry-books and stories." "I don't care if he ain't," said the other farmer's wife, incensed at the implication of indolence. "He has to study up his Yorkshire dialect to get ready to talk to the summer boarders."

YOUNG AUTHOR: "Tell me frankly what you think of the manuscript of my book. I want to get it in shape for publication, as I have several other irons in the fire." Critical Friend: "Well, that being the case, I would advise you to use the manuscripts for fuel. It might at least help to heat the other irons."

"I LEARN," she said, reproachfully, "that you were devoted to no fewer than five girls before you finally proposed to me. How do I know that you didn't make desperate love to all of them?" "I did," he replied promptly. "You did!" "Certainly. You don't suppose for a minute I would be foolishly enough to try for such a prize as you without practising a little first?"

He was pale, confused, awe-stricken. Every one was trying to console him, but in vain. "His loss," he exclaimed, "does not affect me so much as his horrible ingratitude. Would you believe it? He died without leaving me any thing in his will—I, who have dined with him, at his own house, three times a week, for thirty years!"

OLD FRIEND: "Well, old boy, how have you been getting along? Did you succeed as a novelist?" Mr. Starhigh: "No; the publishers said my imagination was too lively—plots lacked probability, you know—so I had to give it up; but I'm doing first rate." "What at?" "Writing advertisements."

BRIDGET (reading laboriously): "Hov you seen this, Pat? It sez here that whin a mon loses wan av his shins, his other shins get more developed. Fr instance, a blind mon gets more shins av heart, and touch, and—" Pat: "Shure, an' it's quite true; O'fve noticed it myself. Whin a mon has wan leg shorter than the other, begorra, the other leg's longer, isn't it, now?"

He was a small six-year-old, and he was stretched across his father's knee in the attic traditional for generations in the prevention of sparing the rod. "Papa," he asked in the moment of silence before the slipper fell, "are you going to hit me?" "Well, suppose I am. Why do you ask?" "Because, papa," he replied, with all the dignity possible under the circumstances, "I do not wish to be surprised."

BOUXTOWN: "You don't mean to say that boy is from the country? I took it for granted he was city born and bred." Roundtown: "Why so?" "He never gawks around like country boys. Nothing appears to surprise him. He never seems interested in anything. He has that tired, seen-it-all look that comes of city life, you know." "He's from the country. I got him at an idiot asylum."

ENGLISH LORD: "I am going out for a moment." Pouting Wife: "Never to return, I suppose." The wife's words were not heard, as at that instant the noble lord stumbled over the dog and fell headlong downstairs. Part of wife's testimony in subsequent divorce proceedings—"He once threatened to leave me, never to return, and going out he kicked my pet dog most cruelly and brutally, and then, in a fit of maniacal rage, threw himself downstairs."

DESIGNING MAN: "Did you ever notice," he asked, "that it is always the homely woman who wants a pug dog? The pug is so hideous that it makes her seem good looking by comparison. Still, the ruse is so well known now that the possession of a pug is sufficient—" "Who's going to buy a pug?" she asked. "Who ever thought of getting one?" "Why, no one, of course, my dear," he answered, for he was too wise a man to admit that he had heard her telling a neighbour that she thought she'd get one.

SOME years ago, as the mail boat from Ireland was entering Holyhead Harbour, a lady fell into the water. One of the sailors, an Irishman, jumped overboard and rescued her from death by drowning. When she was safe on deck again the husband, who was a calm spectator of the accident, handed the brave sailor a shilling. The spectators did not hesitate to express their indignation at the man's meanness, when the sailor, with native shrewdness, threw a new light on the matter by saying: "Arrah, don't blame the gentleman. He knows best. Maybe if I hadn't saved her he'd have given me half-a-crown."

STRANGER: "Have you any self-winding watches?" Jeweller: "Self-winding?" "Yes, something that will wind itself, you know. My wife has been pestering me for a new watch, but I know she'll never remember to wind it after the first night, and it will rust out, just like the old one." "I have nothing of that kind; but I have a patent photographic watch which shouts 'Wind me' at the proper time every night." "That won't do. My wife'll just say 'in a minute,' and then forget all about it. I'll tell you what you want. You fix it so that when it needs winding it will start up and whistle 'A Hot Time in the Old Town' until she attends to it."

THE bee of Mexico does not "improve each shining hour." As there is very little cold weather there, no necessity exists for laying in winter stores of honey, and the bee is therefore as lazy as a cockroach.

METALS get tired as well as living beings. Telegraph wires are better conductors on Monday than on Saturday, on account of their Sunday rest, and a rest of three weeks adds 10 per cent. to the conductivity of a wire.

THE Siamese have so strong a superstition against even numbers that they will have none of them. The number of rooms in a house, of windows or doors in a room, even of ranges on a ladder, must always be odd.

## SOCIETY.

THE only Royal M.D. in the world is Queen Amalie of Portugal.

THE cost of giving Buckingham Palace frontage a new coat of paint is £2,000.

THE electric light is now installed nearly all over Windsor Castle, the former prejudices felt by the Queen being quite overcome. The latest room to be fitted with it is the Royal library, in which, some years ago, a lieutenant in the Guards thought he saw a ghost.

THE Hereditary Princess of Hohenzollern-Langenburg, third daughter of the Duke and Duchess of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, is very happily married. She has one little son. The Prince is related to the Queen through his grandmother, who was Her Majesty's step-sister. He is a good deal older than his pretty young wife, and is devoted to her.

THE Queen has lent Birkhall House, near Ballater, to Dowager Lady Southampton, who is one of Her Majesty's ladies of the bedchamber. Birkhall, which is a very picturesque old place, was formerly the Glen Muick seat of the Gordons of Aberfeldie. Prince Albert purchased the Birkhall estate of seven thousand acres from the late Mr. Gordon for the Prince of Wales, the property being paid for out of the Duchy of Cornwall savings, and the Prince of Wales sold the estate to the Queen about fourteen years ago. Prince Albert improved the property (which adjoins Balmoral deer-forest) by extensive planting, and Birkhall Woods now contain large herds of roe-deer. For some years Birkhall was the autumn residence of the Duchess of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha (then Duchess of Edinburgh), but the place has recently been occupied every season by the Duchess of Albany and her children.

THE full title of the young Duke of Albany, who will at some future time, if he lives, succeed to the Dukedom of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, is Prince Leopold Charles Edward George Albert, Duke of Albany, Earl of Clarence and Baron Arklow, Prince of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, Duke of Saxony, Prince of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha. He was born at Claremont on July 19th, 1884, and succeeded his father, the late Prince Leopold, as second Duke at his birth. The late Prince Leopold, her Majesty's fourth son, was created a Peer of the United Kingdom in May, 1881. He married, in 1889, Princess Hélène Frederica Augusta, daughter of the late George Victor, reigning Prince of Waldeck and Pyrmont. The Duke of Albany is at present at Eton, but will complete his education in Germany. He is said to be more amenable to the idea of the succession than was his cousin, Prince Arthur of Connaught.

A PROGRAMME of the arrangements for each day of the German Emperor's stay in England has been drawn up; and this matter was settled by the Queen, as far as possible, while the Prince of Wales was at Balmoral. It is probable that there will be a day's shooting in the Great Park; while the Emperor will spend another day at Oxford, and a third day can be devoted to the Mausoleum, the Royal farms and the Frogmore gardens in the morning, and to Eton in the afternoon. There will probably be a special meet of the Queen's Buckhounds, which the Emperor and a large Royal party from the Castle will attend. It is very likely that the Emperor will spend a day at Aldershot. For the evenings there will be a large dinner-party on each night, and probably at least one State banquet in St. George's Hall. There will most likely be a couple of theatrical performances in the Waterloo Chamber. It is expected that the Emperor's stay at Windsor Castle will extend over a week, in which case he will attend service on Sunday morning (November 26th) at the Garrison Church, and at St. George's Chapel in the afternoon.

MISS ELSBETH CAMPBELL is one of the few Society ladies who can play the bagpipes. At the recent concert given by Lord Archibald Campbell her playing of the bagpipes was one of the chief attractions. Miss Campbell is bright and musical.

## STATISTICS.

ONE sailor in 256 is lost at sea.

IN India only one male in ten, and one female in 160 are able to read.

MECHANICS are first on the list of inventors, but clergymen are a close second.

ONLY one person in fifteen has perfect eyes, the largest percentage of defectiveness prevailing among fair-haired people.

RUSSIA'S Asiatic possessions are three times the size of Great Britain's; but hold only 23,000,000 inhabitants, as compared with England's 297,000,000 subjects.

## GEMS.

It only rests with ourselves to make any position in life, which circumstances render it expedient for us to occupy, desirable.

NO man lives without jostling and being jostled. In all ways he has to elbow himself through the world, giving and taking offence. His life is a battle in so far as it is an entity at all.

If we desire to reduce mental activity, it stands to reason that we must attend to nothing. We must let the mind drift. We must not attempt to exercise any control whatever, but let the thoughts stray as they will and follow any line of association that is a line of least resistance.

ALL the toil and trouble of the world, and all the work which began with the life of man is directed towards one great end—the doing away with sin and suffering and the establishment of purity and peace. And this work seems almost hopeless, not because the multitude does not approve of it, but because individuals are cowardly and will not do their share of it.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

**PORK SAUSAGES.**—Two pounds lean pork, one pound of the inward pork fat, two tablespoons bread-crumbs, add salt, pepper, a pinch of powdered cloves, and, if liked, a pinch of dried sage. Fill clean skins and use.

**HOME-MADE BEEF SAUSAGES.**—Take two pounds lean beef, free from gristles, and mince it finely, also quarter-pound suet, pepper and salt to taste, and in home-made sausages a little allspice, or even a little thyme. Fill very clean skins with the mixture, and cook.

**LONDON BUNS.**—One pound flour, quarter-pound butter, quarter-pound sugar, quarter-pound orange-peel, three eggs, one teaspoonful essence of lemon, two teaspoonful baking powder; rub the butter among the dry ingredients, cut up the peel in little square bits and add; beat up the eggs and put aside a tablespoonful to glaze the buns; mix a little buttermilk with the remainder, and with this make all up into a soft dough; grease an oven shelf and put the dough down on it in round places; brush with the egg that remains and put some lump sugar on top; bake in a quick oven for fifteen minutes.

**BROILED GROUSE.**—Singe, draw, and wipe the birds, split them in halves through the backbone lengthways, but do not cut right through the breastbones, as they must still be joined together. Lay them on a dish and pour over them one teaspoonful of salad oil, and a seasoning of salt and pepper. Rub this well into them. Slightly butter a gridiron. Place the birds on it, putting the outside to the fire at first. Broil over a quick, brisk fire for about seven minutes on each side. Then place on pieces of hot buttered toast. Put a few small pats of Maitre d'Hotel butter on each and place some neat rolls of toasted bacon round. Be sure and serve this " piping hot," or it is spoilt.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

AFRICAN elephants can climb mountains with remarkable ease.

THE empire of Morocco is the most important State that is absolutely without a newspaper.

AT meetings of the British Cabinet no official record of any kind is kept of the proceedings.

NO receptacle has ever been made with sufficient strength to resist the bursting power of frozen water.

IN Madagascar silk is the only fabric used in the manufacture of clothing. It is cheaper than linen in Ireland.

MAROCANT is said to have been brought to England by Sir Walter Raleigh in 1595, but not to have come into general use till 1720.

IT is said to be a Russian remedy for insomnia for a dog to sleep in the room, and preferably in the same bed, with the sufferer.

THE Malay language is spoken by more than 40,000,000 persons. It is said to be easy to learn, as it has almost no grammar.

A CLOCK is being constructed for Liverpool Street Station, London. The interior of its case could allow five persons to dine easily.

THE construction of a cigar-box may seem to be a very simple matter to the novice, but the box passes through 19 different processes before it is ready to receive the cigars.

A BLACK lioness has been added to the collection of animals in the Jardin des Plantes, in Paris. Lions of this colour are found only in the interior of the Sahara, and are scarce even there.

AMONG many of the tribes of the interior of Luzon it is considered sacrilegious to disturb the earth, for which reason they have not themselves dug for gold and have prevented others from so doing.

THE hair of rabbits and other animals in Russia is converted into bowls, dishes, and plates, which, are valued for their strength, durability, and lightness. The articles have the appearance of varnished leather.

IN Germany potato-bread is used by the natives of Thuringia to feed their horses, especially when they are worked hard in very cold weather. The animals thrive on it, and their health and strength are excellent.

THE most interesting church in England is the church on the fens at Holme, near Peterborough. It is a houseboat, 30ft. by 9ft. None of the parish live more than a mile from the river, and the church has the advantage of being movable.

A "CUTE YANKEE" has hit upon a novel method of protecting his cash-box from marauding fingers. He sprinkles the box with a powder which has the peculiar effect of dyeing the skin blue, the colour being merely intensified by washing.

MADEIRA is a paradise of flowers, for those seen only in greenhouses in Great Britain flourish at Funchal in the fields and by the waysides; whilst the myrtle, the rose, the jasmine, and the familiar honeysuckle go largely to make up the fragrant hedgerows. Green bananas with their feathery summits waving in the wind, orange trees laden with golden fruit, and whole plantations of palms growing among the houses meet the eye in the capital of Madeira; the rarely beautiful coral tree, the vivid hue of the scarlet hibiscus, and the white bells of the tulip tree mingling with the sweet-smelling blossoms of the folkad, Alexandrian laurel, and smilax. On the sea cliffs round about the island grow quite lavishly the Madeira stock, a couple of kinds of lavender, genista, and pride of Madeira, which in March puts out quantities of blue flowers for the adornment of the grey cliffs. The deep red bloom of the pomegranate may be seen running riot in the hedges, when the pretty pink blossoms of oxalis mingle with the snowy flowers of the Star of Bethlehem in vineyards and roadways in April and May. The sweet violet, identical with our own much-loved flower, grows abundantly on the hills, and is brought down into Funchal daily for sale. It is, indeed, a very paradise of flowers, fresh air, and sunshine.



## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

**PAULINE.**—We do not recommend you to do so.

**Q. T.**—It is quite out of our province to determine a matter of the kind.

**ANXIOUS READER.**—Consult an aural surgeon; we cannot recommend one.

**BRIDEGROOM.**—The bridegroom provides all the future home and its furnishings.

**DISFIGURED.**—Let them alone; the more you interfere with them the worse they become.

**LOTTA B.**—Certainly you should return the young man's presents since the engagement is broken off.

**L. M.**—Lemonade made from fresh lemons, toast and water, soda water and milk, home-made ginger beer.

**NEILA.**—No doubt you are liable, but as to what amount we cannot say. Better pay the sum claimed.

**ONE IN SIXTY.**—Each payment is an acknowledgment, and the six years must elapse from the last payment.

**DANSKIE.**—You could merely smile and appear gratified, or you could say something about feeling pleasure on your side too.

**FAITH.**—You can claim actual travelling expenses and for loss of time. The latter will depend on your business and position.

**DEBILITATED RELATIVE.**—A "nephew by marriage" is not a "nephew" in the sense in which the word would be construed in a will.

**A THROTTLED MOTHER.**—No, he could not easily buy his discharge in India; although if he did, he would require to pay passage home.

**CARLEW.**—Try benzine, a little diluted with water, sprayed over the spot. In some cases spirits of turpentine will take out the spots.

**BABY.**—Cover the stain with butter or olive oil, and when softened apply spirits of turpentine, and finally benzine to remove the greasy residue.

**YOUNG MOTHER.**—Vaccination is legally compulsory, unless within four months of a child's birth a certificate of exemption is obtained of the justices.

**C. P. A.**—The reason of the sun assuming such a deep red colour on a misty day is owing to the fact that fog permits the passage of red rays more easily than any other.

**AMBITIOUS.**—Our columns are for household purposes, and not trade or wholesale manufacturers'. We never reply through the post or give recommendations or addresses.

**COMMITTEE MAN.**—A chairman has both a deliberate and a casting vote except where it is expressly arranged that he is to have one only, as in case of Speaker of the House of Commons.

**PASSION FLOWER.**—The passion flower was so named because the early Spanish missionaries regarded it as emblematic of the passion or sacrifice of Christ and its attendant circumstances.

**WITCH.**—There is no cure except the sciences; the attempt to burn out the hair roots often ends in setting up eczema, which is much worse to look at and experience than the harmless hair.

**SWEET MARIE.**—All monasteries in Britain were suppressed by Act of Parliament towards the end of the sixteenth century, their revenues being diverted mainly to the endowment of universities.

**MIDDE.**—Some do it in case of specially promising lads who are likely to be of use on board from the day they go on board; you must just go round trying until an accommodating employer is found.

**O. S.**—One of the largest forests in the world stands on ice. It is situated between Ural and the Okhotsk Sea. A well was recently dug in that region, when it was found that at a depth of 300 feet the ground was still frozen.

**R. D.**—Begin by closing up all apertures in doors and windows, then place a shovelful of bricky-burning coal from the fire in centre of the apartment; throw some sulphur on, and retire with all speed; return in about two hours to open windows.

**A CONSTANT READER.**—A present can be given any time within a month of the ceremony. If invited—in replying, it depends whether you are a near friend, or not. If you are only an acquaintance, it is best to reply in the third person, thus—Miss — has much pleasure in accepting, &c., &c.

**ROBERT.**—His attentions probably mean nothing but what is demanded by the ordinary usages of society. If so, there is no harm either done or meant; but if you believe he has overstepped the bounds which simple courtesy demands, call him to task at once.

**ROBINET.**—Something like intelligence is often exhibited by plants. If, during a dry season, a bucket of water be placed near a growing pumpkin or melon in the course of a few days it will turn from its course, and get at least one of its leaves in the water.

**VOLUNTEER'S SWEETHEART.**—A Volunteer cannot "buy himself off," except perhaps by payment of the capitation grant for each unfulfilled year of his engagement; let him state his circumstances to the officers and they may agree to let him go; the customary thing is, however, rather to suggest how he can adapt the circumstances to the fulfilment of his engagement.

**FAMILY CARE.**—If the youth said he was over eighteen years, and looks like it, he cannot be got off except by purchase, amounting to £10 within three months; let him stay, we advise; he will benefit by discipline, and have every chance to improve himself; there is no saying what he would do next if you brought him home.

**HAD MANNERS.**—When a visitor leaves a party before the other guests it is customary to do so without exciting any general observation. The farewell should be made to the hostess or host, or both, in a low voice; and if they cannot easily be found, one may retire without even bidding them good-night, though regrets should then be left with a friend for such abruptness.

**APOLLO.**—Apollo is the most popular god in the Greek mythology; "he may be regarded as the characteristic divinity of the Greeks, inasmuch as he was the inspiration of Greek life in its most beautiful form and the ideal representative of the Greek nation; he is usually represented with a lyre, being among other things, the god of song and minstrelsy."

**ENGAGEMENT.**—An engagement of two years is by no means the usual limit for young couples. At times, when fortune seems adverse, it is prolonged to five and occasionally even to ten years. But it is not well to let the freer years so slip by, and the expectation of a life-long companionship be so long deferred, if it is possible by energetic exertions for the lover to earn a living income.

**STUDENT.**—Louis Philippe (or Louis XIX) abdicated the Throne of France on February 24th, 1848, when a Republican Government was established, and maintained till 2nd December, 1852, when Louis Napoleon was elected Emperor; he possessed the throne until 4th September, 1870, when upon his defeat and capture by the Germans at Sedan a Republic was again proclaimed in France, which still continues in power.

## DESTINY.

Like a shadow that flies from the sun-god, we slip out of life and are gone;

The place where we were is vacant; for who will remember till noon

The drop of dew like a diamond, which gleamed at the glimmer of dawn?

And when the singer has left us, who cares to remember the tune?

In the leaves' deep drift in the forest, what bird is seeking the one

Beneath whose shelter she builded her tedious, love-cradled nest?

It has lived, it was used, has perished; now loath—its use being done—

Forgotten of sunshine and songster, in the dust whence it came. It is best.

But we—we shrink from the leaf's fate, and we murmur, "Soon they forget;

These friends whom we loved, 'who loved us, and shared in our pleasures and mirth."

Our names are lost in the silence death bringeth, and no regret

Endureth for us, low lying in green-gemmed bosom of earth.

O mortal, accept the omen. We live, we are used, and we fall

As the leaf before us has fallen; we pass from our place and are not.

The living have grief sufficient; content thee to fold thy pall

Remembrance and sorrowful grieving, and be of the living forgot.

Rememberance and sorrowful grieving, and be of the living forgot.

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**ONE IN THOUSAND.**—We should advise you not to oppose the idea, beyond making a condition that he shall not marry until he is twenty-one. By that time we have little doubt that the engagement will have come to an end by mutual agreement between the two foolish young people; a boy and girl of their age need hardly be taken seriously, as one or other, or both of them, will be pretty sure to find a mistake has been made before very long. Opposition is only likely to foster their affection for each other, and, perhaps, induce them to make a secret or runaway marriage, which they would bitterly repent afterwards; whereas if you simply acquiesce in the fact of their intention to marry in three years' time, you will find the plan a natural death before the time has expired.

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\*. We cannot undertake to return rejected manuscripts.

## AWAY UP IN THE AIR.

IN America they have recently been erecting business buildings from fifteen to twenty-four stories high; and the upper floors rent for almost or quite as much as the lower ones.

The possibility of this is, of course, due to the development of the lift, or "elevator," as our cousins over there name it. I personally know of one of these tall buildings, in the *twenty-third* story of which there is a fine and flourishing restaurant. I dined up there one summer day last year, and might have tossed a loaf of bread down on the weather vane of the highest church steeple in the city.

But there! It is the lifting machine that does it. Any arrangement that takes us off the earth, without putting us to trouble and exertion, opens a new area of existence. Do you imagine I should have eaten a chop in the twenty-third story of that Tower of Babel if I had been obliged to climb twenty-two long flights of stairs to get there?

Scarcely; for of all the various ways of making a man's legs ache, and taking the breath out of him, climbing stairs beats the band. There is no better test of the elasticity and toughness of the muscles, and of the conditions of one's heart and breathing apparatus.

All of which brings me round to the spot I ought perhaps to have started from—Mrs. Turner and her troubles. She says that for ten years or more she was bothered with indigestion—or dyspepsia, if you care to call it that; it is exactly the same thing. The luxury of a good appetite was to her only a dim and fading memory; she ate as a tired and sleepy sentry walks—only because she had to.

And even then she was punished for it; for after she had taken (most carefully did she select it) a meal of victuals, she was sure to suffer from pain and misery at the stomach, chest and sides.

"My breathing," she says, "alarmed and worried me quite as much as any of the other symptoms of my complaint. Sometimes it almost seemed as if my breath were going altogether out of my body, as a bird flies out of a cage when the door is left open. I got about on the level fairly well, but when I tried to

climb stairs I had to stop and gasp on every step. The effort would set my heart jumping and beating; and I caught mouthfuls of air as you have seen children clutch at bits of down floating through a room.

"In hope of relief I tried one kind of medicine after another, but for years I never had the good fortune to find the right one. I was very, very weak and did my work only in the half-way fashion that people must do it in, who have the will without the power.

"At length I chanced to read in a newspaper about how persons troubled with the same ailment had been entirely cured by Mother Seigel's Syrup after having suffered as much and as long as I had. I began taking it, and the first bottle did me so much good I felt convinced it would help me out. I continued using the Syrup, and in a little time it did for me what the paper said it had done for so many other afflicted ones.

"I became able to eat and digest, and my breathing got to be as free and easy as when I had no disease to depress and half suffocate me. I could go upstairs quickly and lightly as a girl. I slept well and gained strength with every dose of this wonderful remedy. I am now in excellent health and give all the credit to Mother Seigel's Syrup."—(Signed) (Mrs.) MARY TURNER, Ragg Cottage, Alswere, South Molton, March 17, 1899.

"Five years," writes another, "I went through the wretchedness of indigestion. I had pain at the chest and all the other symptoms and consequences of that common and dreadful complaint. Nothing did me any good until I began using Mother Seigel's Syrup. This speedily cured me and I have never had the trouble since. I know of nothing that is so sure and quick in breaking up a cold as the Syrup."—(Signed) (Mrs.) CHARLOTTE SNODIN, 52, Hunter Street, Northampton, January 24, 1899.

It is all of a piece. Whether we want to work at this, that, or the other; to dig ditches or climb stairs we must get the digestion right; and *there* is where Mother Seigel's Syrup has a place pretty much to itself.